

MONSTER PROBLEMS

by
Brian Duffield

21 Laps
03/02/12

BLACKNESS.

The only sound we hear? PEOPLE MAKING OUT.

They stop suddenly. Whisper quietly to each other:

KAREN
Are you sure he's asleep?

ANDERSON
Who?

KAREN
Joel! Who else?

ANDERSON
Of course he's asleep!
(a little louder)
Joel! Joel! Are you awake?

KAREN
Shhh! Stop it!

Silence.

ANDERSON
See! Not awake. It's just you...
(kissing resumes)
And me...

KAREN
(caving)
...And Joel...

ANDERSON
It's even better that way. It's
like we're... being scandalous...

Karen giggles. Push-over.

KAREN
I just... feel bad...

ANDERSON
Don't feel bad...

KAREN
Are you sure he's asleep?

ANDERSON
Karen. I am totally sure he's
asleep.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

JOEL DAWSON IS TOTALLY AWAKE.

His back to the couple. Wide eyed in his own personal hell. He's twenty. Strong and handsome, though he only knows half of that.

The making out behind him picks up steam.

JOEL (V.O.)

I give Karen and Anderson three months before she "accidentally" gets pregnant. They'll probably make me a godfather. It's my consolation prize, like, "Aw, sorry you're single Joellie, but here's a baby we made from sex."

Joel quietly rolls out of bed and onto the floor.

JOEL (V.O.)

I guess it's kinda my fault, as I proved to be extremely instrumental in their relationship.

MONTAGE

Cross cuts between Anderson and Karen, talking to Joel.

KAREN

I want to kiss him-

ANDERSON

-So bad-

KAREN

-ev-er-ee-where-

ANDERSON

We held hands-

KAREN

And then he touched my... Ya know.

ANDERSON

The best five seconds. OF MY LIFE.

KAREN

...I think I'm in love with him.

ANDERSON

...I think? I mean-

KAREN
(swooning)
All we do is talk.

ANDERSON
(LESS swooning)
All we do is TALK. And all I wanna
do is-

KAREN
Get married.

ANDERSON
(quietly)
If something ever happened to her
I'd probably decapitate myself.
That means I love her, right?

KAREN
(posing as if pregnant)
Absolutely. I'd be like a spider-
mama for him and carry hundreds of
his babies if I could.

ANDERSON
I think I'm gonna ask her.
(smiles)
Thanks man.

We finally see Joel again. He smiles back as best he can.

JOEL (V.O.)
They got married last week.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The bedroom is separated into sections by thin, hospital-type
curtains. There are other beds here, full of people.

A flickering candle in Karen and Anderson's space projects
their shadows. The start to a silhouette porno.

JOEL (V.O.)
I may never sleep again.

Joel sighs and creeps out of the room.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Pitch black. Joel runs his hand on the wall until his eyes
adjust. And when they adjust, he sees A COUPLE MAKING OUT
(AVA & TIM) on the other side of the hall.

Joel tries to sneak by them. Fails. They are not embarrassed.

AVA
Oh, hey Joel!

TIM
Joel! How's it going?

Joel waves in the dark as he tries to hurry past.

JOEL
Hey. Can't sleep.

AVA
Oh. We know the feeling.

They giggle. Joel forces a smile and walks on.

JOEL (V.O.)
Ava and Tim got close after his
parents died.

INT. FOOD HALL - NIGHT

Joel's alone, carving wood in a small cafeteria when Ava stumbles in groggily. Joel smiles kindly, opens his mouth to talk to her when-

Tim storms into the hall. Paces anxiously. Tries not to explode. Fails. Grabs a chair and SMASHES IT AGAINST A WALL.

Crumbles to his knees. Crying.

Joel gets up but Ava waves him down. She's got this. She kneels and wraps her arms around Tim. Let's him cry.

Joel can only watch.

JOEL (V.O.)
They became inseparable after that.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Joel walks past them as they resume making out.

JOEL (V.O.)
In every way.

Down the hall a light is glowing out of a room. Joel walks barefoot towards it and peeks inside-

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sees one hell of an attractive man (RAY) sitting at something that looks like a SONAR.

Oh, and one hell of an attractive woman (ANNA LUCIA) is straddling him.

All they're doing is staring into each other's eyes. Fuckers.

JOEL (V.O.)
Ray had his pick of girls since,
like his dad and grandad, he's the
tech guy. I guess girls have this
thing for guys that live past
thirty.

INT. GAME NIGHT - NIGHT

A group of young people are playing cards. Joel tries talking to Anna Lucia as she stares at Ray with fuck-me-eyes.

ANNA LUCIA
Go fish.

JOEL
It's funny that we still say "go
fish" right? Since none of us have
ever gone fishing.

RAY
Go fish.

JOEL
-or seen a fish or-

ANNA LUCIA
Go fish.

RAY
Go fish.

They have completely excluded the group from their game at this point. Joel can do nothing but sit there and watch.

JOEL (V.O.)
They are survival of the fittest at
its finest. If there was ever a
situation where they were the last
two people on earth-

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Joel skips by the canoodling couple unseen.

JOEL (V.O.)

-They'd die really quickly. But
they'd at least let humanity go out
on an attractive note, I guess.

INT. DIFFERENT ROOMS - NIGHT

Joel peeks into a different bedroom. This one's bigger. A
DOZEN cots, all coupled up. Lots of snoring. Focuses
specifically on an OLD MAN (DALE) alone in a single cot.

JOEL (V.O.)

There are thirty-seven of us, of
which I am the eighth oldest. Dale
is the oldest by over thirty years.

(beat)

He knew my dad. He had three wives.
Dale, not my dad. And not all at
once. That would be gross.

He checks a second room, this one full of little kids
sleeping on the floor, bunched up together adorably.

JOEL (V.O.)

There are eight kids here. We use
them as bait.

(beat)

That was a joke.

INT. WEAPONS ROOM - NIGHT

Joel lights some candles...

JOEL

What's up Gertie.

Revealing GERTIE, an old, over-it COW standing randomly by
the wall. It doesn't give a shit about Joel.

JOEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Gertie is the only single girl
here, but she's a cow. I mean that
literally. She is literally a cow.
We had another cow but things got
bad and now we only have one. Have
you ever seen a cow? Do you have
any animals?

(MORE)

JOEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 (beat)
I wish you were here.

The walls are lined with HANDMADE WEAPONS. Spears. Swords. Shields. All made from spare wood, branches, bone and teeth.

And mounted at the top of the walls? Bizarre, monstrous SKULLS.

Joel picks up a GIANT CROSSBOW RIFLE and a packet of arrows. The bow is made of ONE GIANT RIB.

And it's okay to start to wonder: *Where the fuck are we?*

JOEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*I really hope that's not weird or
 creepy to say. I embarrass myself a
 lot in these letters despite the
 fact that you'll probably never
 read them.*
 (loads arrow...)
*I like to think you'd think I was
 sweet. Not too much of a weirdo.*
 (aims...)
A sweet weirdo at the very least.

He fires: bullseye. He smiles sadly to himself, as the title comes up quietly over the lonely boy with the crossbow rifle.

Monster Problems

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Joel writes "*sincerely, Joel*" into a notebook full of similar letters.

THIRTY-SEVEN PEOPLE are huddled together in the control room. This is everybody, and the light shows what the dark hid:

Anderson has ONE ARM. Karen has SCARS ON HER NECK. Dale has ONE LEG. Some look worse off. Others look normal.

But right now, every single person sits quietly and listens while Ray mans a two way radio. Headphones on.

RAY
 ...Only two attacks last week!

The group all make sounds as if this is a great thing.

Whatever Ray hears next, he sugarcoats.

RAY (CONT'D)
...Minor casualties.

DALE
Ray.

Ray looks at Dale and relents.

RAY
Four down.
(listens)
But... two born!

More positive reactions. Clapping and shit.

Ray listens close through the headphones.

RAY (CONT'D)
(into radio)
Say again? The signal's garbage, I-

He hears something. Smiles and suddenly point-snaps at Joel.
Everyone gets giddy.

RAY (CONT'D)
Alrighty Joel... Aimee's asking...
how tall are you?

Joel thinks. Everyone stares at him.

JOEL
In what unit?

RAY
Unit?

JOEL
American or metric?

RAY
Who the hell uses metric?

JOEL
Europeans!

RAY
That's probably why there are no
Europeans anymore! Feet'n'inches!

Joel puzzles over this question for a minute.

JOEL
...I actually have no idea.

KAREN

Up Joel!

Karen marches over to Joel and pulls him to his feet. Joel is a good head shorter than every man down here, and certainly not as strong.

He never hears the end of this.

KAREN (CONT'D)

I'm five three so you are-

They stand facing each other inches (or millimeters) apart. Joel looks past her awkwardly. She doesn't notice.

ANNA LUCIA

Five seven?

ANDERSON

Five six more like it.

RAY

Well which is it?!

(into radio)

One sec guys-

DALE

Say it's five eleven.

Everyone looks at Dale.

DALE (CONT'D)

Five eleven. Trust me.

Joel looks at Ray and reluctantly nods.

RAY

(into radio)

Hey, so he's five eleven... Yeah, suuuuper tall.

The big strong men all snicker. Joel stares at his feet guiltily.

JOEL

I shouldn't have lied-

RAY

Joel, we're losing battery-

JOEL

Oh, shit, okay...

He scrambles through the notebook frantically. Finds a page with a list of questions. Finds the next on the list-

JOEL (CONT'D)
What color is your hair?

RAY
You've never asked that before?

JOEL
No, I just, never, I don't know-

RAY
(into radio)
What color is Aimee's hair?

The group waits anxiously. Ray hears a shocking answer.

RAY (CONT'D)
She said... red.

The group murmurs in shock. Joel lets it sink in.

The battery powers off. Ray grabs a tool box and heads out of the room to fix it.

The group begins dispersing as Joel writes "red" beside the question in his notebook.

JOEL
People have red hair?

ANDERSON (V.O.)
The answer to your question is yes.

INT. FOOD HALL - LATER

Anderson and Karen sit with Joel. They all eat oatmeal.

JOEL
Which question? I am full of questions.

KAREN
But not the "what color is your hair" question? For a year you never thought to ask-

ANDERSON
The red hair question.

JOEL
No! I thought to ask but I always
only had a few seconds and I wanted
to know what she was like-

ANDERSON
Joel, shut up. Pay attention.

Anderson looks around suspiciously. Karen groans.

KAREN
Andersonnnnnnn!

ANDERSON
What! He deserves to know!

KAREN
But it's gross!

ANDERSON
But it's the only proof we have.

JOEL
What are we talking about?

ANDERSON
Promise the most excellent promise
that you won't tell anyone we gave
you this. To borrow. Not keep-

KAREN
Not we! You!

JOEL
I promise! What proof?!

Anderson leans in dramatically.

ANDERSON
Whenever people get married, a book
gets passed on to them.

JOEL
A book?

KAREN
A gross book.

ANDERSON
A great book. A book that teaches
certain married people activities.

KAREN
I hate you Anderson.

ANDERSON

Karen! Who is Joel going to hook up with here? Seriously! He doesn't need to be excluded from this book his whole life because of bad math. *He needs this.*

Karen and Joel look at each other. She knows it's true.

Anderson puts a small, weathered book on the table. It's probably over a hundred years old. There's a bookmark in it.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

This is going to be the best day.
OF YOUR LIFE.

Joel opens the book to the book-marked page-

Goes wide eyed! Slams it closed!

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Red hair!

JOEL

(whispers in terror)
What-is-this-book!?

ANDERSON

It's a step-by-step guide to having
a good marriage.

Karen punches Anderson hard in the arm, while Joel stares at the closed book in front of him.

INT. HATCH - NIGHT

Joel sits beside a ladder that goes up farther than we can see in the candlelight. Crudely painted on the floor is a compass. Joel sits facing east.

Joel has Anderson's book open, revealing a picture of a busty red head in a kama sutra position. But Joel is drawing CLOTHES over her (and her partner).

DALE (O.S.)

Whatcha reading?

Joel quickly holds up a different book he was absolutely not reading: "ARE YOU THERE GOD? IT'S ME, MARGARET" by Judy Blume.

JOEL (V.O.)
You learn a lot about girls by what
they remember to take with them
during the end of the world.

INT. SALLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Power out. Lights flash violently outside. The screams and
roars of unseen beasts shake this girl's room.

And the desperate TINY GIRL herself grabs the things that are
most important to her. Clothes. CDs. Make-up.

JOEL (V.O.)
At least, I hope it was a girl and
not some creepy old pervert.

And as she leaves the room, she grabs the book...

INT. HATCH - NIGHT

DALE
What were you really reading?

Joel guiltily holds up THE KAMA SUTRA BOOK. Dale sees the
pencil by Joel's feet. He sighs.

DALE (CONT'D)
Were you drawing clothes on them?

JOEL
...Just on the red head.

Dale leans against the wall.

DALE
I remember when Betty and I got the
book. That was my favorite book.
Why were you drawing clothes on the
red head?

JOEL
I dunno. It felt rude.

Dale laughs, sits awkwardly.

DALE
You alright?

JOEL
I'm drawing clothes on a naked girl
so I can pretend it's this girl
I've never met who lives thirty
miles-
 (points east)
-that way. I'm doing great.

They laugh together.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Do you ever regret trying to leave?

DALE
I mean, it would've been nice to
have had two legs for the last
forty years.
 (smiles)
I just regret I didn't get farther.

Joel ponders this. Dale imitates Joel and their most frequent conversation:

DALE (CONT'D)
"How long would it take me to get
thirty miles from here?"

JOEL
"A day or two if you were left
alone."

DALE
"If I wasn't left alone?"

JOEL
"Then you wouldn't get thirty miles
from here."

The two friends laugh, though what's particularly funny isn't clear. Joel looks up the ladder, into the dark above.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joel lies awake in bed. All we hear is making out.

INT. GAME NIGHT - NIGHT

Joel plays cards with a group of married people. He is the thirteenth wheel.

Ray and Anna Lucia have evolved from two word conversations to one word conversations. Fuck me eyes continue. Joel is sitting between them and is in hell.

RAY
Guess.

ANNA LUCIA
What?

RAY
Love.

ANNA LUCIA
You.

RAY
Always.

Joel suddenly BANGS HIS HEAD on the table loudly. Leaves his head there as everyone stares at him. Slowly raises it.

JOEL
...I had a bad hand.

The group of married people stare at him. Thirteenth wheel.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Joel is walking to his room when he passes the Control Room. Ray's legs are crossed tightly.

RAY
Joel, cover me for ten minutes?

Before Joel can answer, Ray is gone, leaving Joel alone.

Computer lights in the dark like Christmas. The hum of old computers. The radar circles.

Joel sits in Ray's chair. Sees the microphone for the radio. An old piece of paper lists the frequencies for other communities. Most have been crossed out.

They didn't last.

Joel stares at one number that's not crossed out.

He looks around anxiously.

And decides to GO FOR IT.

He punches in a frequency and holds the microphone to his lips. When he speaks, his voice is low and shaky.

JOEL

This is seventy-forty-five, come in
thirty-twenty-two.

He waits. And then:

VOICE

*This is thirty-twenty-two, what's
going on, Ray?*

It's a woman's voice.

JOEL

I... this is actually Joel and I
was... hoping to talk to Aimee? I'm
sorry, I can go-

VOICE

Joel? The Joel?

JOEL

I guess? I dunno--

VOICE

Oh! Hold on Joel.

Silence. Joel waits. Sweating. Staring down the hall,
expecting someone to interrupt him bef-

AIMEE

H-hello? Joel?

Joel is silent. Breathless.

Her voice is as nervous as his.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Hello?

JOEL

Hi. How... how are you?

AIMEE

Sleepy, but I'm good.

JOEL

I'm sorry if I woke you. And that
it took me a year to ask what color
your hair is.

She laughs. It's like music.

AIMEE
*Oh, it's okay. I hate my hair. I
 wanted to lie but the girls
 wouldn't let me.*

JOEL
I bet it's beautiful.

Joel cringes. Hates himself for that until-

AIMEE
*You have a nice voice. It doesn't
 sound like it does in my head.*

JOEL
(terrified)
Is that okay?

AIMEE
No, yeah, it's perfect.

Joel melts. She sniffs. Is she crying?

AIMEE (CONT'D)
How'd you get allowed on the radio?

JOEL
I poisoned Ray.

AIMEE
Oh my God!

JOEL
No! Not really! That was a joke!

AIMEE
Oh.

She giggles.

What was a green battery light is already flashing red.

JOEL
Shit the battery's almost dead-

AIMEE
You're joking.

JOEL
Yeah, it hasn't charged up since-

AIMEE
I wish you were here.

Joel's heart skips a beat. It is both thrilling and heartbreaking to hear.

JOEL
I write you letters.

AIMEE
Really?

JOEL
Ahh! Is that lame?

AIMEE
(laughs happily)
No! I'd love to read them someday.

The battery dies. Joel sits there in the chair. Numb.

RAY (O.S.)
Joel?

Joel looks over at him. Completely out of it.

Ray sighs sympathetically.

RAY (CONT'D)
Gonna take a while to recharge.

JOEL
(silently)
Sorry.

Ray walks over to the chair and pats Joel on the back.

RAY
I'll tell the others we had an
emergency call from... somewhere.

Joel simply nods.

RAY (CONT'D)
You okay?

JOEL
Yeah, totally. Thanks Ray.

Joel weakly walks away. As if gravity was twice as heavy.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

All we hear is making out. Joel stares at the red head in the kama sutra book. It's not sexual. More like a soldier staring at the wife he doesn't know if he'll ever see again.

INT. FOOD HALL - DAY

Joel holds a toddler (PETE) while Karen holds an old weathered PICTURE BOOK up to a group of children.

KAREN
And this is a...

KIDS
Flower!

KAREN
And if we ever, ever see one we...

KIDS
Run far away!

Joel laughs. Karen looks at him with annoyance.

JOEL
What! Have you ever seen a flower
down here?

Before Karen can say anything, the lights silently TURN OFF and RED LIGHTS come on in their place.

Joel and Karen look at each other: Fuck.

She takes Pete from Joel's arms. Groans.

KAREN
Here we go again.

She leads the kids towards the bedrooms as Joel runs off.

INT. WEAPONS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joel grabs as many weapons as he can. Gertrude is no help.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Joel finds a group already gathered by the hatch ladder.

JOEL
Is the corn okay? What's up there?

RAY
I dunno, but I'm gonna guess...
something bad.

CONNOR and BART, forties, grab a MACE and a SPEAR from Joel.

JOEL
I'm coming too.

CONNOR
That's still funny after all these
years.

They ruffle Joel's hair condescendingly, kiss their wives
(KALA and BRIGHID) goodbye and run down to the hatch.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Joel watches them CHARGE UP THE LADDER. When they open THE
HATCH, a shaft of SUNLIGHT beams down.

Joel stares at it lustfully until-

SLAM! The hatch is closed.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The group watches the sonar. Waits... Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep.

We see two dots appear. Bloop.

RAY
There they are.

But there are only two dots there. The whole group waits
nervously.

RAY (CONT'D)
Maybe it was a fals-

BLOOP! A HUGE DOT appears on the sonar! The group gasps as
they see it rapidly approach the tiny two dots and-

One of the tiny dots DISAPPEARS.

A quiet, awful silence as they realize one of their own is
more than likely DEAD.

ANDERSON
S-straws!

Kala's shaking hand holds out straws for some of the men in
the room. Joel is not one of them, and he is not impressed.

JOEL
Are you serious? This is retarded!

ANDERSON
Joel, you'll get massacred-

JOEL
I will not!
(holds up crossbow)
Have you seen me with this thing?

Beep. Beep.

TIM
Joel, quit being a bitch!

JOEL
I am the complete opposite of a
bitch! I should be allowed to go
up! You want a list of reasons why?

ANDERSON
NO-

JOEL
One: I leave no one behind down
here if I die. Two: I make all the
weapons so I'm the best to use them-

ANDERSON
Pick 'em boys-

JOEL
Three: I HAVE MULTIPLE ARMS.

Beep. Beep. *Bloop*.

TIM and another guy (JIN) get THE SHORTEST TWO.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Guys...

But they ignore Joel.

Joel watches as Tim kisses Ave goodbye in slow motion. It's
all he wants in life.

Suddenly, above them we hear-

THE POUNDING OF DOZENS OF GIANT FEET. Like heavy rain on a
rooftop.

Tim and Jin run to the ladder. Wait for the signal. Scared.

Beat. Beat. Beat.

RAY
GO-GO-GO!

They charge up the ladder! When they open the hatch-

THE WEIRDEST NOISE FILLS THE HATCH! Imagine an insect monkey inside a blender and-

SLAM! The hatch is shut again. Only the dull noises of scraping and thumping heard from above,

When Kala offers the straws again, Joel takes them ALL.

JOEL
There. I got the short straw.

Joel throws his crossbow over his shoulder-

INT. HALLWAY / HATCH - CONTINUOUS

Sprints down the hall and starts climbing the ladder when-

THE HATCH OPENS!

Sunlight pours down onto Joel.

JOEL
Hey! You get it?

But there is no answer.

Joel takes an arrow in his hands nervously when-

A STRANGE SHAPE APPEARS OVER THE HATCH-

JOEL (CONT'D)
Oh-!

And then the shape FALLS DOWN TOWARDS JOEL!

JOEL (CONT'D)
OH-!

Joel hooks his feet into a rung and LAYS UPSIDE DOWN AGAINST THE LADDER AS THE OBJECT FALLS PAST HIM-

And **SPLATS** on the floor-

Joel looks down and sees-

THE HEAD-

Of that INSECT MONKEY. Still twitching a little.

It's fucking gross. Eyes everywhere like tumors. A couple mouths. You get it.

TIM reappears at the top of the hatch and painfully states:

TIM
We lost Connor.

Everyone looks up at him. We can hear the others hacking away furiously at something out of sight above ground.

TIM (CONT'D)
It had these acid... jet... holes-

KALA
Can you bring him down?

Everyone's attention is drawn to Kala.

She stands quietly. Elegantly.

Tim is quiet for a moment. Shakes his head.

TIM
I'm so sorry Kala.

Kala forces a smile to no one in particular, and leaves.

From the ladder, Joel watches her go.

JOEL (V.O.)
Connor's dead.

INT. ROOM - DAY

In silence: Connor, twenty-some years younger, watches as an infant is carried to an excited, bearded man. JOEL'S DAD.

JOEL (V.O.)
He was there when I was born. He told me that before my dad held me for the first time-

Joel's Dad sits on the ground, his back against the wall. Then takes the infant in his arms.

JOEL (V.O.)
He sat on the ground. He never said why.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

The full group stands in a circle, talking about Connor. It's his funeral.

JOEL (V.O.)
*There are thirty-six of us, and I
 am the seventh eldest.*

INT. FOOD HALL - NIGHT

Joel stumbles sleepily through the food hall, towards the weapons room when-

KALA
 I miss alcohol.

Joel jumps, and sees Kala sitting by herself. A cup of water in front of her.

KALA (CONT'D)
 I've never had any, but I miss it.

JOEL
 Are you doing okay Kala?

Kala makes a fart sound from her lips.

KALA
 I don't think it's disrespectful to
 say we were more out of convenience
 than anything. But he was mine, and
 I was his and now I wish I knew how
 to be drunk.
 (quietly)
 And I loved him.

Joel opens his mouth to speak but she cuts him off.

KALA (CONT'D)
 Why are you even here?

JOEL
 I couldn't sleep.

KALA
 No, why are you still here. Under
 ground, with us.

JOEL
 I'm needed here.
 (then, honest)
 Or cuz I'm a pussy.

KALA
I agree. Go get that girl already.

JOEL
I think that's the water talking.

Kala laughs. Smiles fondly at Joel.

KALA
Don't be selfless so I can be
selfish.

Kala stands and leaves Joel alone with that thought.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Joel has his Aimee-book ready as the group radios with her colony.

RAY
(into radio)
...No attacks.

The group somberly agree that this is a great thing.

RAY (CONT'D)
(into radio)
...What? Really?

Everyone pays attention. Joel keeps writing in his book.

RAY (CONT'D)
...Apparently three survivors found
them! Three men from out west!

Now Joel's interest piques. Everyone seems thrilled. Everyone but Joel.

DALE
Where the hell have they been all
this time?

And we can tell that deep in his soul, Joel already knows what these new men mean for him:

JOEL
Is Aimee there?

Ray looks at Joel. Gets it. Slowly, everyone else does too.

RAY
(into radio)
...Is Aimee there? Joel has his que-

Ray's cut-off. He looks at Joel. It's not good.

RAY (CONT'D)
She's um... with the survivors.
She'll be around next time.

Joel completely zones out as they continue talking.

IN JOEL'S SILENT IMAGINATION-

We see THE THREE MEN. They are muscular, handsome, manly men.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joel snaps out it and stares at THE HAND-DRAWN MAP above the equipment. Specifically, the STAR BY THE OCEAN.

And then he surprises himself and says out loud:

JOEL
I'll be there in three days.

Everyone looks at Joel in silence.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Tell Aimee I'll be there in three
days.

KAREN
Joel... You'll die-

JOEL
Probably.

He smiles and runs out of the room.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joel grabs an old backpack. Stuffs it with the few clothes he has. The Aimee-letter notebook.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He pours some oats into a small cloth bag. Pockets a few strips of monster jerky.

INT. WEAPONS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joel gets his crossbow and loads a dozen tooth-tipped arrows into his quiver.

Straps A KNIFE to his leg.

Looks at Gertie, who is finally paying attention to him.

JOEL

At least I won't eat you.

Whether or not Gertrude understands this is irrelevant, because she is a fucking cow.

INT. THE HATCH - CONTINUOUS

Joel makes his way to the hatch and finds EVERYONE WAITING. Blocking his way. Joel steps up to them calmly.

JOEL

I can take care of myself. I'm stronger than you think I am. I've been scared of doing this my whole life. And now the only thing I'm scared of is that I didn't do it a week ago.

(beat)

This is my only chance guys.

Anderson holds something up in his one hand. A roll of paper.

ANDERSON

We figured you might need a map.

Joel smiles and takes it. Hugs his friend goodbye as the group parts for him.

Kala and Joel make eye contact. She looks proud.

At the ladder, he finds Dale and Karen.

DALE

Three days?

JOEL

Figured it was a good middle ground between two days and dead.

DALE

Everything will try to kill you.

JOEL
I'll just aim for their heads and
hope for the best.

They smile and hug tightly.

Joel faces Karen. She is miserable. Doesn't look at him.

KAREN
Stay away from the ocean, okay?

JOEL
I'll do my best.

She hugs him.

KAREN
You're an asshole if you get eaten.

Joel laughs. Looks back fondly at the group.

JOEL
I'll radio in once I get there.

Beat. They all watch him. He tries to think of the perfect thing to say but all that he can muster is a simple-

JOEL (CONT'D)
Bye guys.

And he ASCENDS THE LADDER. Reaches the hatch. Spins it open.

It unlocks. He looks down at everyone twenty feet below.

And pushes the hatch up-

EXT. THE SURFACE

The hatch door opens and we are in-

A CORN FIELD.

Tall stalks surround him.

Joel slams the hatch closed and-

RUNS TO HIS LEFT. EAST.

The only sound his running steps through the corn. It's claustrophobic until finally-

He clears the corn and finds himself in-

THE PLAINS

Gorgeous green grass. Bright blue sky. You can practically smell how fresh it is.

Joel's eyes need a moment to adjust. *THAT'S* how bright it is.

And that's when he hears AN EAGER GRUNT. Sees something SCURRYING TOWARDS HIM.

Two legged. Four feet tall. Furry. Breathes like a bull-dog.

We'll call it **THE CRITTER**.

Joel kneels and aims his crossbow at the oncoming beast. Takes his time. Grins. He FIRES-

And misses. The Critter doesn't slow down, but there's still time.

Joel loads a second arrow. Waits to get the perfect shot. Doesn't grin this time and FIRES.

Barely misses! But now, what shouldn't have been a problem is now most definitely becoming a problem.

The Critter is twenty feet away... *ten...*

Joel frantically loads and FIRES a third arrow as The Critter LEAPS FOR HIM-

KA-SHUNK!

The arrow doesn't just KILL The Critter - it sends it flying back a good few yards before it crashes into the ground.

Joel breathes a sigh of relief. That was *too fucking close*.

He runs to the dead Critter and gets a good look at it. Like a two legged warthog. Tusks. Dopey looking.

Pulls the arrow from its body triumphantly when-

A BONE-SHAKING ROAR breaks the silence. Miles away? Closer?

Joel sighs. Looks at the meaty morsel at his feet longingly.

JOEL
You look delicious.

Joel finds east. Runs before the scavengers find him.

MONTAGE

Joel **SPRINTING** through the plains! Heroic, fist pumping shit!

-Joel discovers a row of **TELEPHONE POLES**. Some are destroyed, but a few are still standing. He stares up at them in simple awe. Weaves through them as he runs on.

-Joel discovers an abandoned **GAS STATION**. No idea what it is, but he loves it. Takes out a rusty pump. Thinks it might be a weapon. Pretends to shoot it.

-He high fives an old metal street sign proclaiming "**SWIM YOUR CARES AWAY! BOATWRIGHT BEACH - 27 MILES AWAY!**"

He doesn't see anything that seems to want to eat him. Yet.

EXT. PLAINS - DAY

Joel approaches A **VAST FOREST**. Gigantic trees. Joel starts trying to walk around it. Smart enough to know going inside should be avoided.

While he walks, he practices meeting Aimee.

JOEL

I taught myself how to make all our weapons and arrows and-

(pretends she replies)

You think that's cool? I just wanted to contribute. I can teach you how to shoot-

He's interrupted by a **SQUAWK** in the sky.

Looks skyward. Sees the shape of a **BIRD** flying his way.

He aims the crossbow. Expecting it to be close at any moment.

But sees it's not close at all yet. But it's getting *bigger*.

Joel slowly lowers his weapon, realizing just how ineffectual it will be. Starts walking slowly backwards **INTO THE FOREST**.

The "bird" **CRIES AGAIN**. Ear-piercing now.

Suddenly it **DIVE BOMBS** towards Joel!

JOEL (CONT'D)

(Sarcastic. Obviously.)

Yay.

And he sprints **INTO THE FOREST**.

EXT. THE FOREST - DAY

Joel is just a speck running through.

He looks back and can only see the frustrated shadow of whatever the fuck that was. Unable to make its way inside.

Or unwilling. It flies away, leaving Joel in eerie silence.

And the deeper Joel walks...

The more signs of the past he finds.

At first, it's only junk. Children's bicycles. Toys.

And then CARS. Rusted. Overgrown with plant life.

Joel strokes a car wondrously as he passes. Tries opening a door, but it's not budging at all. He reluctantly moves on.

Soon it's clear: Joel is in what used to be **THE SUBURBS**.

EXT. THE SUBURBAN FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The massive, gorgeous trees literally growing through HOMES.

Joel hears CREAKING above him. Looks up, crossbow ready-

But sees nothing but the trees. Then hears-

A low GRUMBLING.

He scans the forest nervously. Can't see anything suspicious.

It happens again. Louder. Closer?

Terrified of being out in the open, Joel slowly backs up to one of the ruined homes-

And like a soldier, he stalks inside-

INT. A HOME - CONTINUOUS

No one's been here for decades. Moss hangs from the ceiling.

FLOWERS grow out of what used to be the couch. Beautiful and tall, like bluebird sunflowers.

Joel almost admires them-

When one of them lurches forward, **SHOOTING NEEDLES!**

He ducks! The NEEDLES pierce the wall. Their poison SMOKES.
As the other flowers begin FIRING AT HIM, Joel dives into-

INT. A BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

And kicks the door closed behind him.

He hears the needles *thump-thump-thump* into the door. But then... silence.

JOEL
(exhales)
Dammit, Karen...

He looks around. The bed is practically a garden. No glass in the windows.

Cracked frames lie on the floor. Joel wipes one clean, revealing a photo of a GIRL. His age. Jumping by ocean waves.

This is the first time Joel sees what the ocean looks like.

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME JOEL SEES WHAT A BIKINI LOOKS LIKE.

He quickly pockets the picture from the frame and investigates the rest of the room.

He flips through some old books and a weathered POSTCARD falls out. He picks it up off the floor and finds it's of NEPTUNE. He flips it over and on the back the note reads:

"Laurie, Neptune is the same color as your eyes. Neptune is my new favorite helium planet. I'm sure these facts are unrelated. Love, B."

Joel stares wistfully at this forgotten token when-

VOICE (O.S.)
(weakly)
Help... me...

Joel listens beside the window nervously.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Help me...

It sounds like A WOMAN. And she sounds HURT.

Joel peaks outside to see if he can see anyone. He can't.

Joel debates staying put, but it's a debate he loses when he hesitantly climbs out the window...

EXT. THE SUBURBAN FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Joel sticks close and low to the house's edge. Reaches the end of the block. Still sees nothing.

He walks a few more steps and then hears the voice again.

About ten feet above him.

VOICE (O.S.)
Help me help me help me help me
help me help me help me help me-

He reluctantly looks up...

And sees something that sort of looks like lips. But the lips don't belong to any face. Or any person. They belong to the underbelly of something oak brown. And fucking huge.

A Daddy-Long-Leg on steroids.

The "mouth" is part of the monster's lure for prey. The lips get excited.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Helpmehelpmehelpmehelpmehelpmehelpmehelpm
ehelpmehelpme-

Joel tries to remain still. His fingers tighten around the crossbow trigger.

His eyes move to the left and he sees THE HEAD LOWER.

Pimple eyes. A toothless, slurping mouth. And we'll call it-

THE SHELOBITCH.

Its head pivots on its neck like a demon possessed fly.

Its legs, perfectly camouflaged like trees, tense. Eight like a spider? More?

Honestly? Joel doesn't give a shit right now.

HE FIRES HIS ARROW AND SPRINTS AWAY!

The arrow STABS OUT one of The Shelobitch's dozens of eyes.

It screeches!

Helpmehelpmehelpme-

As Joel weaves through the forest, The Shelobitch climbs up into

THE TREES-

And begins stalking Joel from above.

From its stinger it releases GUMMY WHITE WEB, grasping for Joel, barely missing-

AHEAD-

Joel sees an opening among the trees. What used to be a YMCA in the distance.

Suddenly The Shelobitch drops DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF JOEL!

Joel backtracks and runs for a STOREFRONT-

Joel THROWS HIS BODY THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR .

THE STORE-

The door collapses inward-

Knocking SOMETHING OVER-

Joel scrambles to his feet-

And so does THE CREATURE he knocked over which looks terrifyingly like-

A RAPTOR-

Who looks super stoked that dinner ran into it.

Chirrup happily!

Fast as lightning, Joel FIRES an arrow INTO ITS THROAT!

The Raptor CRASHES BACK when-

THE ROOF-

Is ripped off the store by The Shelobitch!

Joel scrambles! Somehow gets out of the store and into-

THE CLEARING-

The Shelobitch searches the rubble of the house for Joel, unaware that he's making a getaway-

Joel turns as he runs and sees the monster completely oblivious as to his whereabouts.

He almost smiles.

And promptly gets plucked off the ground.

IN THE AIR-

Three giant talons are wrapped around Joel's body as he rises-

Constricted-

The dagger head of the flying beast looks back at Joel and squawks its domination. Leather wings strong enough to lift a house fly them higher and higher.

Not quite a dragon. Not quite a pterodactyl. We'll call it-

THE DACTYL

Joel squirms in its grip. Not going anywhere.

Until-

WEBBING grabs the body of the beast!

Joel and The Dactyl look down-

And see The Shelobitch on the ground below, reeling them in.

JOEL

Oh shit-

The two giant monsters are completely evenly matched. In weight. In strength.

The Dactyl tries biting at the webbing, but can't reach-

Won't let go of Joel either.

And so the following happens:

The Shelobitch begins ASCENDING-

As the Dactyl begins DESCENDING-

The two nearing each other in the middle of the sky-

JOEL (CONT'D)
Shitshitshitshit-

THE SHELOBITCH
Helpmehelpmehelpmehelpme-

The Shelobitch climbs up its own web with its clawed appendages. Its gummy mouth slobbers open.

Once the beasts meet, they begin SHREDDING AT EACH OTHER-

Joel can only do his best to NOT DIE.

The Dactyl gets one of The Shelobitch's limbs in its jaws and RIPS IT OUT-

It crashes to the ground like a fallen tree.

They rise higher, The Shelobitch lighter.

ABOVE THE FOREST-

For a brief moment in the melee, Joel's above the tree-tops-

And there, in the distance-

HE SEES THE OCEAN.

But before he can enjoy it-

The Dactyl gets another limb in its jaw! But The Shelobitch punches through a wing with its claw-

Until finally-

The Dactyl LETS GO OF JOEL-

Who drops straight into the gummy mouth of The Shelobitch!

As lethal and gross as falling into a public toilet.

JOEL
EUGH!

Joel tries pulling himself out of the slimy mouth as it slurps him determinedly-

And that's when, with its free talons-

The Dactyl FREES ITSELF OF THE SHELOBITCH and-

DOWN THEY FALL-

The Dactyl flying away limply-

Joel slips out of the mouth and becomes AIRBORNE-

The Shelobitch tries to reach for Joel-

Tries shooting its webbing-

They accelerate-

The ground is close-

And that's when-

THE WEBBING HITS JOEL-

STICKING HIM ONTO A THIN TREE-

The force CRACKS the tree trunk-

And it begins FALLING BACKWARDS-

But not before Joel sees The Shelobitch HIT THE GROUND-

EXPLODING. Imagine what would happen to a tarantula if it was thrown against a wall by Mariano Rivera.

THE TREE CRASHES ONTO THE GROUND-

And Joel, out of breath, at last comes to a stop. He begins to breath again for the first time in five minutes.

Throws up.

Laughs a bit. Amazed he's still alive. Tries to move and finds-

HE CAN'T.

He tries harder and harder but the web does its job.

And upside-down, he sees-

THE STORE-

And the rubble moving. Something trying to get out.

JOEL

No no no no no-

And then, sure enough

THE RAPTOR BREAKS FREE!

The arrow still in its throat.

It chirrups to itself. Sounds flat now.

It sniffs the air. Searching-

Joel remains perfectly still-

The webbing suddenly TIGHTENS AROUND HIS CHEST-

There's something UNDERNEATH HIM-

CHEWING AT THE WEBBING-

It begins SNAPPING FREE!

Thread by thread.

Until Joel is able to FREE HIMSELF.

He weakly rolls off the tree. Hits the ground. The Raptor still searching.

Joel can't find whatever freed him from the webbing, but does see his CROSSBOW AND QUIVER in the GUNK OF THE SHELOBITCH-

Runs as hard as he can for them-

THE RAPTOR-

Sees Joel and LEAPS OUT OF THE HOUSE-

Super giddy! Takes off like a CHEETAH for him.

The Raptor will get him in no time flat.

It squeals! JUMPS TO KILL~

And is PUSHED OUT OF THE WAY BY A BLUR!

The Raptor crashes into the ground-

Joel finds himself face to face with the creature that freed him from the web:

A MANGY GOLDEN RETRIEVER.

The DOG barks at Joel and runs through the clearing towards-

THE YMCA CENTER

Joel grabs his crossbow and quiver and RUNS AFTER THE DOG-

The Raptor on their tail-

Joel tries shooting an arrow behind him but it's covered in too much DEAD GIANT SPIDER to work-

He tries another-

This one FLIES-

Hits the raptor in the chest! Barely slows it down!

But gives Joel just enough time to dive inside-

INT. THE YMCA CENTER - SO FUCKING CONTINUOUS!

Joel follows the dog frantically down a hall, then through an open door into-

INT. POOL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joel closes the door. It latches shut.

Sees THE POOL. Or rather, whatever the fuck is living in the pool.

The head of a GIANT FROG, but the rest is a flabby, messy mass of amphibian flesh. Like it had liposuction and now has rolls and rolls of skin leftover. As if that could happen.

THE FROG's beady eyes watch Joel as he follows the dog towards A CREEPY HOLE IN THE WALL.

JOEL

I don't want to know what's in ther-

Click-click-

Joel looks back to the door. Sees the door handle twitching. The Raptor trying to get in. Gets an arrow ready-

But then, The Raptor seems to give up.

Joel exhales.

JOEL (CONT'D)
(to the dog)
For a second there, I thought it
was gonna open the do-

BAM!

The Raptor CRASHES through the door-

Slides on the tile floor.

Chirrup happily when it sees Joel when-

THE FROG-

Begins INHALING.

It's not much at first-

More a distraction to the Raptor-

But as the frogs STOMACH BEGINS EXPANDING-

The VACUUM becomes INESCAPABLE-

Both The Raptor and Joel begin to get dragged towards its
cavernous mouth-

The dog hides inside the creepy hole in the wall-

Joel GRABS the edge of an old rotting bleacher-

The Raptor tries to grab Joel with its claws-

GETS HIS SHOE-

Joel SCREAMS-

They're both dangling in the air now-

The Frog's Stomach taking up most of the room-

Joel KICKS AT THE RAPTOR until IT COMES LOOSE!

IT FLIES INTO THE FROG'S MOUTH and-

VAROOOOOOOOOM!

In an instant, the Frog's entire stomach COLLAPSES AND
COMPRESSES INTO ITSELF.

The thrust of the released air SLAMS JOEL INTO THE WALL-

The Raptor nothing but liquid now. The Frog lets out a content rumble. After a second, the room becomes still again.

Joel lays on the ground in shock. Doesn't even react when the dog begins to lick his face.

INT. THE HOLE IN THE WALL - NIGHT

Joel follows the Golden Retriever through the hole in the wall and finds a small gap. Someone used to live here.

Joel sits against the wall. It hurts to move at all.

There are belongings scattered about. A pillow. A blanket. Clothes. A bed for the dog. The word **BOY** written on it.

JOEL
Is that your name? Boy?

BOY circles and lays on the pillow. Head on the ground. Sad.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Are you all alone?

He doesn't answer. Obviously.

Joel reaches for some of the clothes. A **DRESS**. Before he even touches it, **Boy** **GROWLS**.

Joel lifts his hands up innocently.

JOEL (CONT'D)
I'm sorry! It's okay!

The dog gets up, grabs the dress in its jaws, and returns to his pillow. Head on the ground. Sad.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Does she still live here?

The answer is clearly no.

And off the dog's sad eyes we are-

EXT. FOREST - DAY, FLASHBACK

From Boy's POV, we are RUNNING-

We turn and see OUR GIRL. Fifteen? Sixteen?

She's SPRINTING as something that can only be described as a FOREST JELLYFISH hovers above her.

GIRL
 RUN SAMSON! GO-

*One of the TENTACLES gently touches her head-
 And she goes instantly limp. It's over.
 The tentacle lifts her effortlessly out of frame.
 We bark wildly. Desperately. Hopelessly. And we are-*

INT. THE HOLE IN THE WALL - CONTINUOUS

Boy simply huffs.

Joel gives the dog jerky from his bag. Chews some himself.

JOEL
 Did you think I was her?

Boy is still. Joel points to "the bed".

JOEL (CONT'D)
 Is it okay if I lay here? I'm sorry
 I keep asking you questions when
 your only way of responding is
 either to bite me or not.

Boy doesn't try to stop Joel from laying down. Joel lays his head on the pillow. Groans.

JOEL (CONT'D)
 Please don't eat me while I sleep.

There's something uncomfortable under the pillow. He reaches and finds a CLOTHING CATALOGUE.

JOEL (CONT'D)
 Whoa.

Joel flicks through it. Like going through a girl's diary if her diary was an L.L. Bean catalogue. Penciled circles around the clothes. Hearts and poems around the men.

Joel gasps! Points dreamily at a page to Boy:

JOEL (CONT'D)
 She has red hair!

Sure enough, the model has long Maureen O'Hara red hair. She's nuzzled into a warm knit sweater on the beach.

Joel pulls out his map and shows it to Boy. Guesses he's maybe a third of the way there.

JOEL (CONT'D)
I'm going to the ocean so I can
meet this girl I met on the radio.
She has red hair. She's perfect.
(then)
I saw the ocean today.

Boy moves and lays beside Joel, as the two simply stare at the girl with red hair.

JOEL (CONT'D)
I really like red hair.

IN THE MORNING.

Joel cringes as he wakes up. His face stuck to the magazine.

Boy drops a dead squirrel-thing in front of him proudly.

JOEL
Good Boy.

Joel peels his shirt off. His entire back is a giant blistery purple bruise. It takes him a long time to change but he powers through.

Today might be the day, after all.

Joel rummages through the girl's few belongings. Finds two unused flares. A single grenade. Lipstick.

Laughs to himself.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Only thirty miles...

INT. POOL ROOM - MORNING

Joel crawls out of the hole and finds the Frog watching him. Its eyes poking above the surface of the scummy water.

Joel tries to be as polite as possible.

JOEL
Thank you. So much. For everything.

The frog submerges. Over it.

Joel sees Boy watching him from the hole.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Thank you, as well. Even though I know I wasn't who you wish I was, it was still probably the nicest thing anyone ever did for me. Stay safe, okay Boy?

He smiles, and heads for the door.

Boy BARKS. Joel spins, freaked out.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Shh! Shh!

The dog whimpers. Trots to Joel, then turns back and stares up at him.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Do... do you wanna come with me?

The dog trots back up to Joel's feet. Yes.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Great! Okay, let's-

Joel turns to leave and Boy barks again-

JOEL (CONT'D)

SHH! STOP DOING THAT! I don't want to die until later!

Boy runs back into the hole, and when he returns, he has THE DRESS in his jaws.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Want me to put that in the bag?

Joel kneels in front of the dog and rubs his head gently as the dog struggles to give it up.

JOEL (CONT'D)

I'll take care of it, I promise.

They look each other in the eye, and the dress slowly comes out of the mutt's mouth. Joel stashes it in his pack.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Ready?

Boy BARKS! Joel cringes.

JOEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Dear Aimee. Guess what? I got a dog, and he is insane.

HERO MONTAGE

Joel and Boy make their way across rocky terrain. Joel winces with every step, but smiles through, happy for the company.

Boy runs into some bushes... Returns proudly with a guinea pig sized rodent dead in his jaws.

JOEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Do you have any pets?

Later: Boy runs off again... Returns proudly with a bigger animal, dead in his jaws.

JOEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
In the book "Are You There God,
It's Me Margaret" by Judy Blume, it
says that Judy Blume owns twelve
pets, but only one dog.

Later: Boy runs into some trees... Gets chased out by a badger sized monster...

Which Joel shoots down with ease. Boy barks at the dead badgerbeast victoriously. Pants happily at Joel.

JOEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
That seems excessive.

Joel stops at a bush full of delicious looking purple berries. He goes to pick some when Boy BITES the leg of his pants and PULLS HIM AWAY!

JOEL (CONT'D)
Hey!

Joel looks at the berries. Less appetizing than before.

JOEL (CONT'D)
I'm never gonna eat again, am I?

Boy walks happily ahead. Joel smiles to himself.

JOEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But it's great if you have that
many pets! I hope I get to meet
them. I hope they won't hate me. Or
my dog.

INT. WEEPING WILLOW LAND - DAY

Joel and Boy press on through a forest of WEEPING WILLOW type trees. Joel has to clear the way through like walking through curtains. Boy passes through with no obstruction.

JOEL

This is the one time I'd wish I was shorter.

Boy suddenly tenses, barks once and-

A SPEAR PLUNGES INTO THE GROUND INCHES FROM THEM!

Joel instinctively FIRES the crossbow into the trees-

A MAN SCREAMS!

Boy takes off into the foliage towards the spear-thrower.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Boy! Shit!

Joel loads another arrow and follows quickly where he finds-

THE MAN on the ground. Forties. Rough and scarred. A deep cut in his arm where the arrow grazed him.

He holds Boy at bay not with a weapon, but with a small, pissed off MONSTER.

We'll call it THE HOBGOBLIN. It's like the aftermath of Gollum and a Gremlin boning late one hellish evening. Cute in a gross way. And it wants to rip your face off.

The Hobgoblin has a metal lasso around its neck at the end of a pole, which The Man wields threateningly.

THE MAN

If you aim to kill me I'll let her go and that'll be the end of you!

JOEL

I'm not gonna kill you!

The man looks momentarily surprised to see Joel is just a kid. But it fades fast.

THE MAN

'The hell you shoot me with?

Joel doesn't know whether to feel bad or defensive.

JOEL
...An arrow.

THE MAN
I thought you were a monster!

Boy keeps barking. The Hobgoblin hisses at Boy. Love.

THE MAN (CONT'D)
Can you shut that thing up?

JOEL
I don't know. Can you point that
thing away from me?

THE MAN
If I do then you'll shoot me!

JOEL
If I wanted to shoot you I'd shoot
it in the head and then I'd shoot
you!

The Man has to admit Joel makes a fair point.

In a snap, The Man points his beast away and Joel lowers his
crossbow.

They stare at each other awkwardly, waiting to see if the
other will attack. Joel eyes The Man's bleeding arm.

JOEL (CONT'D)
I can fix that.

The Man looks skeptically at Joel. Relents.

THE MAN
There's a truck back a bit. You can
do it there.

He gets to his feet and leads the angry little Hobgoblin
away, leaving Joel with the question:

JOEL
What's a truck?

INT. THE TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Joel is sitting in the front of an old rusty MILITARY TRUCK.
And is FREAKING THE FUCK OUT.

JOEL
THIS IS AMAZING!

The Man stares at Joel like he's insane. The Hobgoblin climbs around outside the truck, the chain at the end of the pole pinched off at the top of the passenger seat window.

Boy watches The Hobgoblin suspiciously from the backseat.

Joel tries to start the car. Nothing happens. He barely cares.

JOEL (CONT'D)
This might be the coolest thing
I've ever seen.

There's a GPS on the dash. Joel touches a button and it briefly ILLUMINATES. Showing where they are on the map.

Both men gasp and stare in awe at the screen.

A little dot flashes on the map. Them.

We recognize the map. Joel is CLOSER to the ocean.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Holy shit! Is that dot us?

But then it fades out.

THE MAN
I think so. Now are you sewing this
or am I gonna spill out all day?

The Man promptly takes off his shirt and his body looks like he's been whipped, bitten, tortured, you name it.

Some of the scars might be self inflicted. Like tattoos.

Joel pulls a needle and thread out of his bag and gets ready to sew the wound up.

JOEL
It won't be clean.

The Man laughs.

THE MAN
Ya think?

JOEL
And it'll sting.

THE MAN
It already stings, just do it
quick.

Joel obeys. The Man barely flinches.

THE MAN (CONT'D)
What's your name, kid?

JOEL
Joel. This is Boy. You?

THE MAN
Clyde. That freak's Marsha. I named
it after my ex-wife.

He laughs uproariously. Joel's not really sure what to do.

JOEL
How'd you catch it?

CLYDE
I made this here pole, waited up a
tree and snared it. Not that hard.
She's got such a temper that I
figure I'll let her loose when
something bigger comes hunting and
make my getaway.

He looks out the window. MARSHA is staring inside, upside
down. She looks annoyed. Clyde makes kissy faces at her.

CLYDE (CONT'D)
Like any woman you just gotta be
confident. And don't let her outta
your sight.

He laughs loudly again. Joel tries laughing along to be
polite.

JOEL
I'm trying to meet a girl by the
ocean.

Joel is met with a blank stare.

CLYDE
I'm trying to get as far from the
ocean as I can. How long you been
trying to meet her?

JOEL
This'll be my second night.

Clyde leans back. Impressed at Joel's insanity.

JOEL (CONT'D)

What's wrong with the ocean?

CLYDE

What's not wrong with the ocean?

(leans in)

The creatures here? They're just animals. But what lives in the ocean? They're different. Your nightmares can't even fathom it.

Clyde looks down. Remembering horrible things.

CLYDE (CONT'D)

Not all the women in the world would draw me to the beach, I promise you that. Some of us holed up in a subway station until we couldn't stay there anymore, and so we moved south. There were three of us, until we reached the water. The others got too close and... There's no coming back from that place, Joel.

He looks at Joel fondly for a moment.

CLYDE (CONT'D)

I had a son once. I went towards the ocean trying to find him but I never did. I think maybe he got smart and moved out west.

(beat)

I'd go back there for him.

Joel smiles, finishes the stitch. It looks crude but it does the job.

JOEL

That should do it, more or less.

CLYDE

I lied before. I didn't think you were a creature. I heard you talking. I was trying to kill you.

Joel tenses. Not sure if he's being threatened.

JOEL

And now?

CLYDE

The dog complicates things as I've only got the one spear, and I don't trust Marsha not to kill me the moment I let her loose. Why'd you help me?

JOEL

Because I had a dad once.

This settles in Clyde's mind. He puts his shirt back on.

CLYDE

Come with me, or if that sits ill with you after what I just said, at least go back west. I don't know where exactly I'm going anymore, but you'll die if you keep on the way you're going.

JOEL

I have to try. She's expecting me.

Clyde chuckles.

CLYDE

Ah. I wish I was twenty again.

He hops out of the truck, making sure Marsha can't get too close.

Joel admires the truck one last time. Strokes the GPS fondly.

EXT. THE TRUCK - EVENING

Boy stands sheepishly behind Joel's legs as Marsha stares at him with her gigantic eyes.

CLYDE

Listen, you're coming up on a marsh, and if you don't get out before dark, kill anything that comes near you or you're good as dead. I'd thank you for sewing me up, but it was your fault I needed sewing in the first place.

JOEL

You shouldn't have thrown a spear at me.

He laughs.

CLYDE

You're lucky I missed. Don't trust
anyone else to be as untalented.

He turns to run and-

JOEL

Wait.

Joel reaches into his bag and pulls out one of his two
flares. Tosses one of them to Clyde.

He catches it, holds it in his hands with surprise.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Thanks for not murdering me.

The two men almost smile at each other before running off in
opposite directions.

INT. THE MARSH - EVENING

Even though technically we're outdoors, you'd never know it.
Fog thick as cotton. Dirty, creamy water seeps up through the
spongy surface beneath every footstep.

Joel and Boy find a SIGN, crudely planted that says:

BEWARE HER

Joel pulls out his knife.

JOEL

Let's hope she's pretty at least.

The more they walk, the more disorienting this place becomes.

How far have they gone? In the right direction? It's hard to
tell as it grows darker and darker, the fog thicker and
thicker.

Boy keeps close to Joel's feet.

JOEL (CONT'D)

When I was really little, something
went wrong with our air filters,
and you could actually see the air,
like clouds. That's when I realized
someone had made our home, and
there was a world beyond it.

(MORE)

JOEL (CONT'D)

My Dad told me it was built by this rich man who was always afraid the world was gonna end but he never actually made it into the shelter when the world really did go to shit. None of us are related to him, he didn't have family or anything. I remember him telling me that living alone just ain't living at all. That guy missed everyth-

Suddenly, Boy YELPS! Falls to the ground in complete and utter agony. Clawing at his ears.

Joel is instantly by his side. Scared shitless. Doesn't know what to do or what's going on.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Boy? Boy! What's wrong?

Boy continues yelping and convulsing in pain. There is absolutely nothing Joel can do to help him.

And that's when Joel hears it:

Singing.

It sounds beautiful. Womanly but more ethereal. Impossible to pinpoint where it's coming from.

It scares the bejesus out of Joel.

He leaps to his feet and steps backwards from Boy, whose eyes roll into the back of his head.

In his total panic, Joel forces himself to turn and LEAVE BOY BEHIND. Saving himself.

Boy notices. Makes one of those horrible squeals.

But Joel can't leave. Runs back to Boy.

JOEL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I did that! I was scared!

The music is all around us now. Joel is shaking.

JOEL (CONT'D)

I won't leave you again. I promise.

He reaches into his pack and pulls out THE FLARE. LIGHTS IT!

And that's when we see THE CREATURE RIGHT BEHIND HIM.

It doesn't make its presence known. It's tall - seven feet, at least - but incredibly wiry. It seems shaped like a person - a head, torso, arms. We'll call it **THE BANSHEE**.

It mimics Joel's every tiniest movement. Cloth and rags cover its body and mouth, except for its big black bulbous eyes. It seems to float. Like its legs never touch the ground.

Joel tries to comfort Boy when he notices water trickling down past his feet. As if someone was squeezing the spongy ground behind him...

He slowly looks down past his feet towards The Banshee-

Feet like a MILLIPEDE. Hundreds of tiny legs. Some rubbing against themselves, creating the music, and whatever the pitch is that's tormenting boy.

Joel grips his knife and-

TRIES TO SWING IT AT THE BANSHEE-

Who SLAMS HIM AWAY WITH A HAND.

Joel flies through the air-

Dropping the flare-

And **SQUEALCH!** Lands hard in the marsh.

He gets to his feet and sees the SHADOW OF THE CREATURE, projected by the flare.

It stands over Boy ominously.

Joel grabs his knife and CHARGES.

His silhouette stands off against the Banshee.

It takes a step back as Joel reappears in front of it. He moves protectively over the dog. Boy notices.

JOEL (CONT'D)
We just want to pass by.

The Banshee motions to Boy. The price to pass by.

Joel shakes his head. Stands brave.

JOEL (CONT'D)
This is my dog and I'll kill-

The Banshee rushes Joel! Knocks him away into the marsh.

With its long, bone fingers, it begins *kneading* Boy. Looking for a way in.

Boy looks desperately for Joel. Sees nothing through the fog.

The Banshee's singing continues. Strokes Boy's face. Almost comfortingly. Lovingly-

When Joel TACKLES The Banshee away from Boy.

The music stops and Boy is on his feet. He's fucking FURIOUS.

Joel tangles with The Banshee but is easily flipped and pinned on his back-

And just as Boy is about to strike-

That sweet, siren music fills the mist, tormenting Boy again.

The Banshee leans close to Joel. Through the cloth, he can see something protruding from its mouth-

The cloth parts and we see IT HAS NO MOUTH. Just VIPER-LIKE TENTACLES, all hungry for a piece.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Oh, you're not pretty at all...

As it leans down towards him, Joel SEES THE FLARE NEARBY.

Reaches desperately for it-

Boy sees the same. Tries to move his body close to it-

With a jerk of its paw, knocks the flare to Joel-

HE GRIPS IT-

BURNS THE BITCH.

As The Banshee leaps off Joel, terrified of the fire-

Joel leaps and sinks his knife DEEP into the creature's neck.

It spasms away from Joel and scurries away a few feet, but stops. Struggling. The singing starts and stops.

Boy rushes The Banshee, barking angrily-

But Joel holds him back.

JOEL (CONT'D)

It's okay. Shhh. I got you.

The Banshee falls over. Slipping away.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Be good Boy.

Joel lets Boy go and approaches The Banshee nervously.

It's obviously terrified of what's happening. It looks up at Joel and there's nothing malicious in its eyes.

It's just sad and lonely. It's not clear how it even could have hurt either of them.

And then it's gone.

Joel cautiously pulls his knife out of the Banshee's throat. Picks up the flare and turns back to Boy.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

Boy glares at Joel. Walks away.

Joel looks at the Banshee one last time. Sees the scraps of clothing and fur covering it. Whatever it could find to keep itself warm and dry.

Joel sees a logo on the cloth: **A BLACK SNOWFLAKE.**

And as Joel heads off after Boy, and out of the marsh, it begins to rain.

EXT. STREET ~ NIGHT

They clear the marsh and find an old road. There are no cars. Trees have broken through the tarmac.

The rain falls harder. Joel stares up, his mouth wide open.

JOEL

I've never felt rain before! It
feels so different than how it
sounds!

Boy splashes through puddles joyfully. A well deserved break from the madness.

Down the road and minutes into the rain, they are both soaked, freezing and desperate for it to stop.

EXT. BUS SHELTER - NIGHT

Joel and Boy huddle under an old dilapidated bus shelter. The moans of creatures in the far distance echo around them.

Joel tries to pet Boy, who bitterly moves away from him.

JOEL

Are you still mad? I came back!

Boy ignores him.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Please talk to me.

But the Dog does not respond. Joel looks sadly into the dark.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Three men showed up at her caves.
There were no single guys there
before, and now there's three.

(quietly)

They're probably really attractive.

Boy suddenly growls at something in the dark!

JOEL (CONT'D)

What is it?

Joel peers out and sees something on the ground.

Crawling weakly.

And not something.

Someone.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Oh shit.

Joel pulls himself to his feet. Readies an arrow into his crossbow and approaches the crawling figure hesitantly.

EXT. THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

It's an **ASTRONAUT**. Still wearing its helmet. Still crawling forward.

It's practically been **TORN IN TWO**. Connecting its torso and legs together is not flesh and blood, but **WIRES**.

A small ferret sized asshole creature chews at the wires obnoxiously. Joel charges it and it runs off into the night. Boy gives chase.

The Astronaut speaks! Barely audible through the helmet.

JOEL
(dumbfounded)
Are... are you okay?

Joel puts his crossbow down and helps roll The Astronaut onto their back as they take their helmet off-

Revealing a **BEAUTIFUL WOMAN**. She smiles at Joel in the rain.

ROBOT ASTRONAUT
Hello! I have eighteen minutes of power left! What's your name?

Joel gazes at the robotic woman in his arms. Stammers. For a variety of reasons.

JOEL
J-Joel. My name is Joel-

MAVIS
Hello Joel! I am so pleased to meet you! My name is Mavis but if you were to write it out, you would write it with a one and not an i.

JOEL
...Okay wh-what happened to you?

MAVIS
Is there a place we can talk that is not in the rain perhaps? I have seventeen minutes of power left!

JOEL
Oh! Of course, here-

Joel reaches under Mavis' arms.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Ready?

MAVIS
Yes Joel, I am ready!

Joel begins to pick Mavis up-

And the wires connecting her legs SNAP.

JOEL
OH SHIT!

MAVIS
(pleasantly)
Oh dear!

Boy returns and barks skeptically at the severed legs.

MAVIS (CONT'D)
It's no matter! I only have sixteen
minutes of power left anyway!

EXT. BUS SHELTER - NIGHT

Joel gently sets Mavis against the wall. Runs back into the rain and retrieves her legs. He sets them by her torso as if they were still attached. Boy remains skeptical.

MAVIS
Thank you Joel! What a lucky girl I
am to cross paths with you! I
thought for sure I was a goner when
the Ark was over taken, and again
when we crashed seven point four
miles from here, and again when I
was bit in half, but then I met you
and you saved me from the vicious
mustela putorius culus! You are, in
no exaggeration of the word, my
hero.

Joel, surprised by such a compliment from a beautiful (though robotic) woman, blushes.

JOEL
Oh, well, you're welcome, Mavis.

MAVIS
With a one and not an i.

JOEL
With a one and not an i, right.
(then)
You're blowing my mind.

Mavis laughs and playfully touches Joel's arm.

MAVIS
What a funny thing to say! You are
funny, Joel!

Joel tries to figure everything out. He sees Boy digging at his backpack. As he talks he takes out the dress for Boy, who rolls around on it sleepily.

JOEL

So you crashed here? Are you alone?

MAVLS

I am now. There were eight of us that survived the crash, out of the forty seven of sixteen hundred that survived the Ark disaster, and of those eight, I am the lone remainder.

(sad but also proud)

I am one of sixteen hundred.

JOEL

What happened to the other seven?

MAVLS

The local fauna happened to the other seven. They attacked me as well, but I was deemed lacking to their surprisingly picky palates. The seven tasted much better, I fear. Knowing you are a higher quality than others is something everyone tries to learn in their lives, but I suspect no one wants to learn that they are better by taste.

JOEL

...I guess you might be right. And what are the... arks?

MAVLS

When the planet was over-run, we took to the stars, believing it a limitless safe haven. It was, for a while, until a fanatic found a way to bring the local fauna into the arks. I know almost everything but I don't know how he did that.

Joel sits beside Mavls. Lost in thought.

JOEL

Are we really all that's left?

MAVLS

(unhelpfully cheery)

Probably!

(then)

(MORE)

MAVIS (CONT'D)

There are still several of us Mavii models on earth, but the nearest one is forty point six miles away, and I lack both the power and legs required to meet her. I can't speak to the human population as you do not have tracking systems, but evolution may rectify that in years to come!

Mavis reaches out to pet Boy. He lets her after some hesitation. Joel notices this small betrayal.

MAVIS (CONT'D)

I am so glad I still have my hands, so that I may pet you!

JOEL

His name's Boy.

MAVIS

What a literal name. Hello Boy. My name is Mavis but if you were to write it out, you would write it with a l instead of an I.

(sadly)

But you would need opposable thumbs and unusually high intelligence for a canine to do that.

JOEL

It's okay. Sometimes I forget that he's not a person too.

MAVIS

You're a special dog, aren't you?

Boy agrees with this.

MAVIS (CONT'D)

Did you have any other questions Joel? I am knowledgeable in over seventeen thousand areas of expertise.

Joel thinks to himself for a moment, until he nervously asks:

JOEL

How do I ask a girl to be my girlfriend?

MAVIS

Why Joel! Is there a lovely lady that has caught your eye?

Joel blushes again.

JOEL

I guess. I'm trying to find her so
I can ask her to be my girlfriend.
(embarrassed quietly)
But I don't know how.

MAVIS

Well she is also a hero of mine,
since without her allure you would
never have been out here and
coincidentally found me. What is
her name?

JOEL

Aimee. With an i and two e's. She
has red hair.

MAVIS

Red hair! Traditionally only one
percent of the population had red
hair, which is caused when there
are two copies of a recessive gene
on chromosome sixteen which causes
a mutation in the MC1R protein.

JOEL

...Oh...

MAVIS

You are lucky. She is potentially
the last red head alive.

Joel's mind is blown. Again. But in a good way. Swoon.

JOEL

Wow.

MAVIS

I had red hair once and was told I
was as beautiful as the sun by a
kind sailor. I was also insulted
many times.

She touches Joel's arm again.

MAVIS (CONT'D)

Do not dilly dally with your
feelings. When you see her, tell
her how you feel. She will respect
your honesty and be in awe of your
leadership qualities.

(MORE)

MAVIS (CONT'D)

Or she will resent you for not ignoring her and playing games with her red haired heart, but seeing as how she is potentially the last of a minority in an endangered species, I hope she is not too picky. Gifts help.

JOEL

Gifts? I don't have a gift.

MAVIS

Hmm. And how far does she reside from here?

JOEL

She lives near the ocean so-

MAVIS

That's only six point three miles from here!

Joel bursts into the biggest smile.

JOEL

That's it?! I can get there tomorrow!

(it sinks in)

I'm going to meet Almee tomorrow.

Mavis, with great difficulty, begins to remove her jacket.

MAVIS

Give her this! It has been in space!

JOEL

What! I couldn't, you need-

MAVIS

I don't feel warmth or cold. It would be such a honor to have this jacket be an instrumental part of the repopulating of humanity. You can wear it in the mean time. I can see that you are shivering as my eyes are extremely expensive.

Joel takes the jacket in his arms.

JOEL

Thank you Mavis.

MAVIS
It is absolutely my pleasure.

JOEL
Honesty. I can do that.

MAVIS
I have complete faith in you.
(then, still cheery)
I have four minutes of power left!

JOEL
Four?! I thought you were at...
more than that!

MAVIS
Communication eats away at my
battery life faster than not
communicating.

JOEL
Oh, God, I'm so sorry, I didn't
mean to waste your-

MAVIS
Joel! No apology necessary! I am so
pleased to be spending this time
with you, and Boy.

She pets Boy again. Joel looks at the beautiful woman sadly.

JOEL
Is there anything I can do for you?

MAVIS
Not unless you have a Titan X-327
core stimulator!

JOEL
...I don't.
(beat)
Mavis, with a I and not an i, how
would you like to spend your next
four minutes?

She looks at Joel. Maybe not as cheery as usual. Maybe a
little self aware. But always smiling.

MAVIS
I would love to sit here with you,
my head on your shoulder and my
hand on your chest, watching the
rain, pretending we are different
people somewhere else.

Joel forces a smile.

JOEL
That sounds perfect.

She smiles blissfully.

Joel awkwardly, but sweetly, moves his arm over her head and onto her shoulder.

She leans her head happily on his shoulder. Rests her hand on his chest. Joel wraps her jacket over them like a blanket.

And with Boy, they watch the downpour in silence.

IN THE MORNING.

Joel wakes up. Gathers his bearings.

Finds Mavis still on his shoulder. Hand still on his chest.

Boy appears, drops a dead critter proudly in front of them.

JOEL
(quietly)
Good Boy.

Joel is quiet for a moment. Sniffs. Looks at Mavis' beautiful dark hair, wrapped loosely around his fingers.

Her eyes closed. Her same happy smile on her face.

JOEL (CONT'D)
I wonder where she imagined she was
at the end.

EXT. GRAVE - MORNING

Covered in dirt, Joel sets Mavis down gently in a grave he's dug. Brings her legs down and sets them where they belong.

He looks at her, lying there. Says nothing.

EXT. FIELD - MORNING

Joel sticks a piece of wood that simply reads **MAVIS** into her filled-in grave. He looks at Boy.

JOEL
A one and not an i.

They stand before the grave. Joel picks at his dirty hands.

JOEL (CONT'D)
You were the nicest lady I ever
met.

He looks at Boy. Boy huffs his goodbye, and trots off.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Thank you for the jacket. I'm sure
Aimee will love it.

Joel smiles sadly at the grave, and limps away slowly.

JOEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*Dear Aimee, I know this is a long
shot, but do you have something
called a Titan X core stimulator?*

EXT. BROOK - DAY

A thin stream trickles by. Boy laps the water up while Joel tries to peel off his shirt. It sticks to his bruised back.

JOEL (V.O.)
*I am less than six point three
miles away from the ocean. Probably
like three miles by now. I hope you
don't think I'm ugly. Sometimes the
guys back home would tell me that
you were actually a sixty year old
fat man pretending to be a girl.*

When it's finally off, he simply lays face-up in the water.

JOEL (V.O.)
*I really hope you're not a sixty
year old man.*

Looks over at Boy. Who is still ignoring Joel.

JOEL (V.O.)
I mostly just hope you like me.

JOEL
Are we friends again yet?

Boy SPLASHES over Joel and runs off. Joel sighs.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Great.

Boy returns, a fish in his mouth. Eats it happily.

JOEL (CONT'D)
(laughs)
You're an asshole.
(then)
Hey, we're fishing!

He laughs to himself and looks downstream.

JOEL (CONT'D)
If we follow this we should get to
the ocean, right?

Joel tries to sit up. Hurts.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Ach. I miss beds.

Boy tenses. Starts sniffing. Runs off without him.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Hey, wait up!

Joel puts on his shirt. After all, today might be the day.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Joel follows the stream to the edge of A JUNGLE when
something catches his eye inland.

He squints. Sees it.

JOEL
Oh my God.

He pushes past some vines and there, with her back to him, is
A GIRL.

Blonde. Red clothes. Just standing there.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Hello?

She doesn't move.

And that's when Joel notices that she's standing in the
center of something weird. Bone shaped like a star. And those
points look razor sharp.

Joel realizes it's not a girl at all, but **BAIT**. Part of the
weird creature she stands in.

Boy suddenly runs towards her happily. Barking.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Boy! No!

Joel runs for Boy and TACKLES HIM before he reaches the girl!

JOEL (CONT'D)

It's not her! It's not real!

Boy eagerly tries to break free of Joel's grip, but Joel does everything he can to restrain the dog.

JOEL (CONT'D)

I know you think it's your girl but
it's not her. She's gone and it
sucks and I'm sorry but this one
won't fix you at all, she'll only
hurt you, you have to believe me.

Boy's struggle becomes less enthusiastic as he begins to understand that she's a decoy.

JOEL (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry that everything wants
to hurt you.

Joel lets go of the saddest dog in the history of cinema. Boy slumps away slowly, back to the river.

Joel stares at the bait-girl, which up close just looks like a fucking tonsil.

And he follows Boy onwards.

EXT. THE RIVER

Joel limps along the stream by himself. Looks into the water beside him and sees his reflection.

Barely even looks like the same guy he did a few days ago.

He looks up. His jaw drops.

JOEL

(groans)

Noooooooooooo.

And the sight of his despair-

The river drips off over the side of a CANYON. Boy stands at the edge, barking wildly.

He looks at the map. He's so close. And most frustratingly:

JOEL (CONT'D)

Well this wasn't on the map.

He looks down the canyon edge. Hundreds of feet deep.

At the bottom, there is a **MASSIVE MONSTER**. Its enormous form scraping both sides of the canyon. It looks miserable.

Boy runs off while Joel watches the giant. He begins barking again and Joel sees what Boy's barking at:

A BRIDGE.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Good Boy!

Joel hobbles towards it but the closer he gets, the more abundantly ridiculous it appears.

Made of rock. MUCH thinner than you want it to be.

JOEL (CONT'D)

No. No way in hell.

For as far as Joel can see, which is pretty damn far, there's absolutely nothing that connects the two sides.

Except for this sorry excuse for a bridge.

Boy hears something among the trees behind them and runs after it, barking. Joel doesn't even try to stop him.

He stares off at the other side, where tropical trees lead off into the unknown. And presumably to her.

He looks like a lost, frightened little boy.

He sits. Pulls out the Aimee-book and his pencil.

JOEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*Dear Aimee. I'm sorry it's taking
me longer than the three days I
promised.*

Boy bursts frantically from the trees. Joel pays him no mind.

JOEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*I'll try to find another way
across. I just want you to know-*

Boy gets between Joel and the bridge, barks threateningly at the forest. Joel looks up at him.

JOEL (CONT'D)
I was thinking maybe wrapping it
around a rock and trying to throw
it to the other side?

And that's when **THE TYRANNOSAUR** head appears from the trees.

JOEL (CONT'D)
But I'm not sure how to stick it to
the rock.
(depressing beat)
I'm all out of ideas, man.

Joel stands and puts the notebook away. The Rex watches him.

Joel turns nonchalantly and sees the dinosaur staring at him.
Forty feet away.

He doesn't move. Doesn't breathe. Boy cowers behind him.

JOEL (CONT'D)
That's what you chased?

A SECOND TYRANNOSAUR appears beside the first. Nips at the
other before focusing on Joel.

Joel roots through his pack with as little motion as
possible. Desperately looking for something.

And then, **THE THIRD TYRANNOSAUR** appears. The eager one. Sees
Joel. Pants like a very excited dog.

And together they break through the trees and Joel sees:

It's not three Tyrannosaurs at all.

It's a **THREE-HEADED TYRANNOSAUR. A CERBERUS-REX.**

Joel looks like he wants to cry. Keeps searching the pack...

They ROAR at Joel and as the C-Rex is about to charge-

Joel FINDS THE GRENADE IN THE PACK. Looks at Boy.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Run across the bridge once this
goes off, okay?

He PULLS THE PIN AND THROWS IT!

The eager Rex head snaps it out of the air obligingly and-

EXPLODES!

The dinosaur falls backwards to the ground. The remaining two heads howling in pain.

Joel turns to run across the bridge-

But Boy runs BACK THE WAY THEY CAME!

JOEL (CONT'D)
BOY! THIS WAY! THIS WAY!

But Boy is not listening.

JOEL (CONT'D)
NO! Son of a BITCH!

He looks at The Bridge. Then at Boy. Remembers his promise.

Joel runs after the dog.

The C-Rex gets back on its feet. A bloody stub where the eager head used to be on the right.

Now just the center (KING) and left (JOKER) heads remain.

They seem completely confused as to what the fuck happened to EAGER when they see Joel running away.

That's all the incentive they need to CHASE HIM DOWN.

Joel tries to run faster but his broken and bruised body is fighting against him.

JOEL (CONT'D)
COME! ON!

He doesn't need to look behind him. He can hear their roars and feel the ground shake under their epic footsteps.

Joel heads into-

EXT. THE JUNGLE - CONTINUOUS

Looking for Boy. And SOMETHING ELSE.

JOEL
Where is it?!

The C-Rex charges into the jungle. One head clearing trees out of the way, the other snapping for Joel. Yay teamwork.

They BITE at him again - inches away!

And Joel finally turns and finds it-

THE BLONDE BAIT-GIRL.

Standing still. The center of that bizarre creature.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Please...

Joel haphazardly aims his crossbow and FIRES-
MISSES.

JOEL (CONT'D)
SHIT!

Joker SNAPS for Joel. ALMOST!

Joel loads another arrow and-
THIS ONE HITS.

The Jaws SNAP SHUT! Covering the Bait-Girl!

It's like a Venus Fly Trap, if it could skitter here and there and was made of nothing but teeth.

In short, it will mess you the fuck up.

We'll just call it TRAPPER.

It LEAPS TOWARDS Joel and the C-Rex!

Joel hits the ground as-

TRAPPER CLAMPS DOWN ON JOKER'S ENTIRE HEAD!

The C-Rex convulses! Tries to free itself. Crashing into trees. King bites at the strange beast to no avail-

Joel sprints out of the jungle, back to-

EXT. CLIFF - CONTINUOUS

And finally sees BOY-

Running back towards the bridge.

JOEL
BOY! BOOOYYY!

Boy does not wait for Joel as he crosses the bridge.

Joel limps towards the bridge, painfully slow. Out of breath.

The monsters battling behind him as he approaches the bridge-
When-

Trapper finally comes loose-

WITH JOKER'S SEVERED HEAD IN ITS CLENCHED JAWS

As it drops to the ground, the C-Rex's miserable body KNOCKS
IT INTO THE CANYON!

Easy prey for the monster hundreds of feet below.

EXT. BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Joel carefully makes his way onto the rocky bridge. A step at
a time. Thinking, at the very least, he's beaten the C-Rex.

The rocks are bumpy and uneven, making it even more difficult
to cross the bridge than it would be in any normal situation.

The One Headed C-Rex stumbles about. Its vision 66% less than
what it was two minutes ago.

It sees Joel and with an ear-splitting roar, GOES FOR HIM.

Joel sees the impossibly big monster charging towards the
impossibly small bridge.

His face perfectly conveys how this is the worst moment of
anyone's life ever.

JOEL
Oh, *come on*.

The Rex LEAPS for Joel!

Who does his best to duck without falling-

But The C-Rex MISSES JOEL and when it hits the bridge-

THUMP!

Its feet struggle to stay on and-

It slips-

FALLS DOWN to a certain death until-

its jaws BITE THE BRIDGE-

IT DANGLES THERE! Every muscle in its body screaming.

It tries to pull itself up but it will never happen thanks to having two very tiny arms.

Somehow the bridge holds as Joel, trembling, stands again.

The Rex roars with its mouth full. Its eyes stare at Joel. Not angry anymore.

Just scared at its inevitable death.

Joel swallows and walks step by step over the dangling C-Rex.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Easy... Easy...

He tries to pick up his pace-

But the C-Rex SNAPS at Joel!

Loses its grip on the bridge!

And with a yelp, it FALLS like a raindrop.

Joel watches it SMASH into the ground below brutally. DEAD.

Finds he can't take his eyes off of the vertigo-

SLURP.

Joel looks down and finds his entire leg covered in the mouth of some kind of **SLUG-LIKE FUCKER**. And he realizes-

That's what the bumps are: Not rocks at all, but **PARASITIC MOUTHS**. They start awaking. Reaching for him.

He tries to free his leg when he sees the mouth covering his shin produce **THOUSANDS OF SYRINGE-LIKE TEETH-**

And then they **BITE INTO HIS LEG!**

Joel screams! The worst pain he's ever felt in his life. He pulls out his knife and desperately stabs at the mouth-

It lets him loose! His leg a bloody mess. Joel tries to scramble for the other side-

Fifteen feet away.

But there are too many mouths biting at him-

One of the slugs **LURCHES FORWARD-**

KNOCKING HIM OFF THE BRIDGE! Certain death!

But he's CAUGHT when one of the mouths on the underside of the bridge BITES HIS ARM!

He SCREAMS! Blood trickles down his arm as he dangles there.

His crossbow SLIPS AWAY. He tries to stop it, but only gets an arrow as he watches his weapon fall to the earth below.

Joel sees the other side. The other mouths reaching for him.

He takes the tip of the arrow in his fist-

He strains and reaches his leg back up to the mouths-

JOEL (CONT'D)
Dear... Aimee... This... Sucks...

Which gleefully BITE DOWN ON IT WITH THEIR TEETH-

Joel stabs the slug mouth with his arm! It lets go, releasing him upside down under the bridge.

Ten feet away.

He swings his arm back to the mouths and they BITE DOWN AGAIN. He cries out.

Frees his leg with the arrow.

Five feet away.

When BOY appears at the edge! Joel exhales thankfully.

JOEL (CONT'D)
BOY! About time!

Joel lets his arrow drop. Gets his backpack in his hand and swings it towards Boy-

Who grabs a strap in his jaws. Even now, Joel smiles.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Good Boy!

But instead of pulling the bag up, Boy digs into its opening-

JOEL (CONT'D)
Wha-

Boy pulls out HIS GIRL'S DRESS-

And LETS GO OF THE BAG-

Joel JERKS DOWN

THE MOUTH LETS GO AND HE FALLS-
CRASHING ONTO THE CLIFF FACE
SLIDES-
FINALLY-
GRABS HOLD!

Ten feet from the top.

Bag still in his hand.

He hugs the cliff face breathlessly. Looks up. Those ten feet seem like ten miles.

But he grinds his teeth and reaches towards the sky-

EXT. THE OTHER SIDE - CONTINUOUS

Overlooking the bridge.

Beat. Silence.

Until Joel's blood soaked hand GRASPS THE TOP OF THE CLIFF!

He pulls himself up!

He lays there. A mess of a man. Hundreds of tiny needle teeth dug deep into his arms and legs.

Struggles to get his breath back when-

He sees Boy. The dress in his mouth.

You've never seen so much rage in a man's face.

Joel picks himself up and staggers over to Boy.

JOEL
You want that dress!

Joel grabs it and TUGS IT AWAY from Boy. They fight over it.

JOEL (CONT'D)
I was your friend, you shit!

Joel collapses and tries to attack Boy, but is just too weak.

JOEL (CONT'D)
I'm not gonna be your left over
replacement anymore!
(MORE)

JOEL (CONT'D)
 I don't need you! You can get eaten
 for all I care!

Joel tries to stand up. Barely makes it up. Cries.

JOEL (CONT'D)
 I don't need anybody, least of all
 you! I'll find Aimee and we'll be
 happy.

For a moment, Boy tries to follow Joel into the jungle-

But Joel is having none of it. Throws a rock at Boy.

JOEL (CONT'D)
 GO AWAY! YOUR GIRL IS DEAD AND I
 DON'T WANT YOU ANYMORE! YOU'RE
 ALONE AND YOU'LL BE ALONE FOREVER!

He throws another rock until Boy finally gets the message and runs away, his dress wrapped safely in his jaws.

Joel watches him go.

He tries pulling some of the syringe-like teeth out of his arm. Finds violet VENOM in all of them.

His arms already black veined and puffy.

He struggles to breathe. Looks into the jungle.

And with no where else to go, he staggers inside.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

The venom. Fucking up his brain. Fevered. Sweat.

Arms and legs drip blood. He hacks at vines with a stick.

A NOISE behind him. Like something that escaped from a nightmare-

He looks back and all he sees .

Are the pale glow of EYES.

He stumbles away. Tripping. Falling. Trying. Until-

He COLLAPSES on the ground.

Forces himself to sit up.

Face what's coming. Like a man.

That same noise again-

He holds his stick in his hands. Raises it as threateningly as he can.

His eyes are all red and yellow. The color of scabs.

But still he tries

As whatever IT is clears into his sight-

Something like a **GIANT PRAYING MANTIS**.

It **SQUEALS** at Joel with delight.

Black honeycomb eyes aglow. Front limbs razor sharp.

Joel looks up at it. Barely even conscious.

JOEL

Hey.

The Mantis raises its limb to STAB Joel-

Whumpwhumpwhumphump-

And with a **FLASH OF LIGHT-**

EXPLODES INTO ASH.

Joel sits there. Now covered in ash.

He uses whatever strength he has left to turn his head-

And sees **A GROUP**.

A group of people?

They wear **MASKS**. Painted. Intimidating.

Two of them **GRAB JOEL**.

He doesn't even protest. Can't.

They drag him to their **LEADER**.

When the Leader speaks, it is unmistakably **A WOMAN'S VOICE**.

LEADER

Who are you?

JOEL

...have you seen my dog cuz I lost my dog...

LEADER
Are there others with you?

JOEL
He ran away because I was awful and
threw rocks and *what is that!*

Joel is distracted by the giant metal GUN that incinerated
The Mantis. A cannon you wear on your forearm. Still smoking.

LEADER
You need to answer my questions.

JOEL
...I want eight of those... I
wouldn't have been eaten by a
bridge if I had eight of those--

One of the groupies holding him puts a blade to his neck.

LEADER
Who. Are. You.

Joel laughs in his daze.

JOEL
Joelie Joel-Joel Dawson Joel.

He laughs because he is the funniest person ever.

But the masked group suddenly become quiet.

And we hear a voice from the back of the group say the word:

VOICE
Joel?

Joel laughs again as a figures moves up from the back. Still
wearing a mask.

Joel stops laughing when he sees **RED HAIR** coming out from
behind the mask.

OMGOMGOMGOMG.

JOEL
OHSITREDHAIR.

The guards let him go and he stumbles towards her.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Aimee?

She puts her hands up to her mouth. Or her mask's mouth.
Emotionally overwhelmed.

VOICE
(really quietly)
It's really you?

OMGOMGOMGOMG.

JOEL
OHSHITITSREALLYME.

He tries to walk and SLIPS-

She kneels and GRABS him in her arms.

He looks up at her mask. Red paint. Evil black eyes.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Y'don't look like I'magined at all.

She laughs behind her mask, and pulls it off.

If God could create a girl beautiful enough to make up for a
monster apocalypse, she is that girl.

Joel goes wide eyed. Stammers. Forcing himself to stay awake
to enjoy the one moment he's always wanted.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Hw.. Wh? Ys.

AIMEE
It's okay! We'll get you help!

And in a true herculean effort, Joel takes Mavis' advice and
uses every last bit of energy to say:

JOEL
Will you be my girlfriend?

She laughs. Wipes the tears away and NODS ENTHUSIASTICALLY.

THE BEST MOMENT OF JOEL DAWSON'S LIFE.

He puts his bleeding fist in the air triumphantly.

And passes the fuck out.

BLACKNESS.

Focus. Dark. Stone. Cold. Like a cave.

Because it is.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

Joel opens his eyes slowly. He has a bit of a stubble now. Lays on a mattress on the floor. Bandaged arms.

He rolls over and sees AIMEE, her back to him, sleeping on the floor. Her red hair inches away.

She's wrapped in Mavls' jacket. It's been washed, but there are still crimson stains on the sleeves.

He touches her shoulder. Almost to make sure she's real. She stirs and turns over. Looks at him.

AIMEE
Hi Joel.

JOEL
Hi Aimee.

They smile awkwardly at each other.

AIMEE
You feeling okay?

JOEL
Yeah. How long was I out?

AIMEE
A week and a half.

JOEL
A week and a half?!

AIMEE
There was a lot of venom.
(re: the jacket)
We washed your jacket. I haven't
just been laying here in your blood
or anything.

JOEL
It was a gift for you, actually.
Sorry I bled all over it.

She cuddles into it.

AIMEE
It's okay, thank you. I probably
woulda stolen it from you anyway.

They laugh again. It's strange and sweet and lovable.

JOEL

I need to radio home-

AIMEE

We let them know you were safe.
Comparatively. Their battery's
getting worse, we've only been able
to get them for a few seconds here
and there. But we'll keep trying
them for you.

Joel is touched.

JOEL

That's so nice. Thank you.

AIMEE

So... In your sleep, you kept
asking for... your boy?

JOEL

My boy? OH! My dog! His name is
Boy!

She laughs. Relieved the maybe love of her life is straight.

AIMEE

A dog! Where is he?

Joel lays there quietly.

JOEL

I don't really know.

Aimee blushes again, because-

AIMEE

You also might... have talked about
me. A lot.

(superfast)

And-I-might-have-read-your-letters.

Joel dies.

JOEL

Oh God-

AIMEE

No, I'm sorry-

JOEL

Ahhhhhh they're so weird-

AIMEE

No! I wanted so badly to have just one of those letters.

(blushes)

And you gave me a bookful.

She peeks up at him. They smile at each other.

IT'S SO ON.

Joel nervously tries to change the subject:

JOEL

(re: bandages)

Can I take these off?

He starts to unwrap them before she can answer and-

Finds his arms are SCARRED TO SHIT.

JOEL (CONT'D)

WHOA.

AIMEE

We did everything we could but... I think the fact that you were bit hundreds of times proved beyond our means.

He holds them up to his face. They look like gauntlets.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

I think they look kinda cool.

JOEL

You do? They were a bitch to make, but I guess it was worth it.

She laughs and they blush again.

INT. THE CAVES - DAY

Aimee shows Joel around her home. Even though it's a cave, it's actually kind of lovely. Like if Anthropologie was located inside a disorienting and labyrinthine cave.

It's lit by dainty string lights everywhere. Warm and cozy.

JOEL

Where do you get your power?

AIMEE

We have mice that run on wheels and that energy gets converted to electricity.

Joel thinks this sounds AWESOME.

JOEL

That's amazing!

AIMEE

(giggles)

I'm joking! Wave power. Same concept as the mice, just with less mice. C'mere.

She leads towards a large area where they find a group of twenty or so people.

Aimee excitedly introduces Joel to everyone. Belle, Donna, Jasmine, Sarah, and so on. And when Joel gets a chance, he asks Aimee the obvious:

JOEL

Where are the men that showed up?

ASPEN (O.S.)

They went to the Ocean and didn't return.

Joel turns and finds a handsome, elegant woman in her forties. **ASPEN**. Before he can say anything, she hugs him.

ASPEN (CONT'D)

Joel! My name is Aspen and I'm thrilled you made it.

She holds Joel's face in her hands.

ASPEN (CONT'D)

It's so wonderful to put a face to Aimee's non-stop monologuing. "Joel's hair is brown! Joel's five foot eleven!"

Looks Joel over. Notes the lie. Joel shrugs sheepishly.

JOEL

On a good day, I guess?

ASPEN

Aren't we all. Come. We'd love to hear your story.

She sits in front of him, with the other women. They look up at him expectantly.

And so Joel tells them, getting more animated as he goes. Acts out the fight with Shelobitch. The Banshee. Talks about Mavis and her jacket. The C-Rex and the bridge. Boy.

Aimee watches the whole time. She steals glances from the other women. And it's obvious:

He's exceeding her expectations.

INT. MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Music plays from a record player. Some of the women dance together, some with their little girls.

Joel admires an ancient bottle of wine. Aspen comes beside him.

JOEL
Is this alcohol?

ASPEN
You bet your ass it's alcohol. It's
a special occasion.

Joel smiles and pours the tiniest of amounts into the cup. Aspen looks at him disapprovingly. He laughs and pours more.

JOEL
You don't have something called a
Titan X Core battery by any chance,
do you?

ASPEN
I don't believe so? Why?

JOEL
Thought I'd ask, for a friend.

She inspects the young man before her.

ASPEN
You might be the first person to
voluntarily do what you did. It's a
good thing you didn't know how bad
it was up there.

JOEL
No, I knew how bad it would be.

She toasts him. He drinks. Scrunches up his face like a ten year old.

ASPEN
You were that lonely, huh.

Joel, too awkward to know how to reply, drinks again.

ASPEN (CONT'D)
Did you know this all happened
because a man was too lonely?

JOEL
All what happened?

ASPEN
This. Our underground lives.

Joel listens.

ASPEN (CONT'D)
There was a lonely scientist who
dreamed of finding a world where he
wouldn't be alone. So he built
himself a door that he hoped would
lead him there.

WE SEE: Not the fable Aspen is telling, but THE LITERAL TRUTH.

A SCIENTIST and his team of hundreds work in a giant test field in a mountainous valley.

Their uniforms have the BLACK SNOWFLAKE LOGO.

Dozens of extremely tall poles beam light together, criss-crossing until it makes a pale purple wall.

ASPEN (CONT'D)
The first time he walked through,
the place he found was almost
identical to the one he left. The
one difference was that there was a
woman there who loved him. Not a
beautiful woman, but a good woman,
a kind woman. And for a time, The
Scientist was satisfied.

WE SEE: A small camera rover enters the purple wall. The Scientist watches on a screen and... the images sent back are of a DIFFERENT PLACE. A boring desert. Familiar yet alien.

The group celebrate.

ASPEN (CONT'D)

But soon, he became confident. He felt he could do better than her, and so a second time he walked through the door. This time, the world was different. It was cracking and breaking, but the woman that loved him was beautiful, if less good and kind. And for a time, The Scientist was satisfied.

WE SEE: THE SCIENTIST and his group, older, making adjustments to their massive machines. The purple wall of light becomes green.

The small camera rover enters and sends back images of a DIFFERENT PLACE. More beautiful. More alien.

More celebrations. But The Scientist remains incomplete.

ASPEN (CONT'D)

But soon, he found himself longing for the first woman, less beautiful but more kind. And despite knowing it was a horrible idea, he walked through the door a third time.

WE SEE: THE SCIENTIST and his group making adjustments. From green to yellow.

The small camera rover enters, and before it can send back images, is sent FLYING THROUGH THE AIR!

The Scientist watches the door he's built with alarm...

ASPEN (CONT'D)

But this time, he didn't find his world. He found hell. And before he could close the door, hell poured out.

And in an instant, hell does pour out as A WAVE OF GIANT CREATURES SURGE FORTH. In seconds, they massacre everyone.

The Scientist, almost dead, watches as the arrival of new monsters never ends. And he is unable to stop it.

ASPEN (CONT'D)

And the man was left alone in hell, and we were left with the ruin of his selfishness.

Joel considers this carefully.

JOEL
Do you believe that?

ASPEN
I do.

Joel thinks for a moment. Concerned and confused.

JOEL
Then why can't we just close the door?

ASPEN
Maybe this is what's supposed to happen, and when we have learned our lesson, they'll leave us alone.

She smiles widely at him. It's a bit unnerving.

ASPEN (CONT'D)
I'm so thrilled you made it.

And she leaves Joel standing there with nothing but confusion and alcohol.

LATER:

"I LOVE HOW YOU LOVE ME" by BOBBY VINTON plays from a record player.

Joel is watching the dancing when he sees Aimee walk into the room. Wearing a simple home-made dress.

Once she sees him and smiles, he could probably die happy. She skips to him as he stands for her.

JOEL
You look incredible.

She blushes.

AIMEE
Really?

Joel nods. She laughs. They're both a bit drunk.

AIMEE (CONT'D)
Would you like to dance with me?

JOEL
I've never danced before.

AIMEE
It's really just an excuse to be
close to each other.

Joel swallows.

 AIMEE (CONT'D)
So would you like to dance with me?

 JOEL
I love dancing.

She shows him where to put his hands and they slow dance.

It couldn't possibly be more romantic. He looks into her
beautiful blue eyes.

 JOEL (CONT'D)
Your eyes are the same color as
Neptune.

 AIMEE
I have no idea what that is.

 JOEL
It's a planet. It's my favorite
hellum planet.

She melts and lays her head on his chest.

Joel has never smiled as much as he is smiling right now.

EXT. THE OPENING - NIGHT

Aimee leads Joel into an OPEN SPACE in the center of the
caves. They can see the moon. There's grass here, and a small
FLOCK OF SHEEP. Only one woman guarding it all.

 JOEL
You have sheep? In the open?!

 AIMEE
We have sheep! In the open!

 JOEL
How are you not attacked
constantly?!

Aimee laughs and sits against the rock wall. Joel joins her.

 AIMEE
The ocean protects us.

Before Joel can ask how that makes any sense:

 AIMEE (CONT'D)
My mom used to name all of them.
How ridiculous is that?

 JOEL
I don't think it's ridiculous.

 AIMEE
Naming things born to be eaten.

 JOEL
That sounds like something my Dad
would have done.

 AIMEE
Yeah? What happened to him?

 JOEL
 (shrugs)
The local fauna happened to him.
What happened to your Mom?

Aimee forces a smile and stares out at the sheep.

 AIMEE
Men happened to her.

She does not elaborate. Joel knows better than to pry.

She lays her head on Joel's shoulder.

 AIMEE (CONT'D)
Are you cold?

 JOEL
No. I don't think I'd even care if
I was.

Aimee wraps her arms around him. She sighs happily. Closes
her eyes to sleep.

 AIMEE
You haven't even tried to kiss me.

Joel freezes.

 JOEL
Should I have?!

 AIMEE
Nope. You're not like other guys.

This may have been the worst thing Joel's ever heard.

 AIMEE (CONT'D)
And I love that about you.

This may have been the best thing Joel's ever heard. He strokes her hair lightly with his fingers. She yawns.

 AIMEE (CONT'D)
I hope your dog is okay.

Joel looks at the moon. Sighs.

 JOEL
Me too.

EXT. CAGES - NIGHT

JOEL DAWSON'S DOG IS TOTALLY NOT OKAY.

Boy is TRAPPED IN A CAGE. Suspended twenty feet in the air. The dress still in his jaws. Scared.

TWO FIGURES approach from below. Women's voices.

 HOLLY
Holy shit! What kinda dog is that?

 DARLENE
Do I look like a dog expert?

 HOLLY
I meant does it have balls or not.

 DARLENE
Oh. Let's hope not.

They CUT THE ROPE holding the cage and it CRASHES to the ground. Boy yelps!

 HOLLY
Easy! What's wrong with you!

 DARLENE
I'm outside! I don't have time to be gentle.

The two figures look in the cage and-

THEY ARE WEARING THOSE FREAKY TRIBAL MASKS.

 HOLLY
Dammit. He's totally got balls.

DARLENE

Dammit. You want to or should I?

HOLLY

Can't we just free it?

Darlene looks at Holly like she's retarded.

DARLENE

Don't be retarded.

Holly sighs and aims her arm cannon at Boy.

HOLLY

Sorry, boy.

The gun whirls to life. Boy stares it down like a badass when-

A DARK BLUR drops from the tree tops, attacking Holly!
Commotion! Animal noises! Screams!

The gun blasts energy here and there as they try to kill this creature! A blast sends the cage through the air-

It CRASHES into a tree and BREAKS! Boy takes flight as fast as his legs can carry him, balls intact.

EXT. THE CAVE ENTRANCE - DAY

Two women stand guard at the entrance to the caves. Joel walks out, stretching. They nod politely at each other.

JOEL

Hey, have you seen a dog out here
in the last few days?

The women look at each, shake their heads.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Is it okay if I whistle for him?

GUARD

Yeah, no, that would be bad.

JOEL

Yeah as soon as I said it, it
sounded stupid.

Joel steps forward and searches uselessly into the distance.

When he turns back, he sees the MOUTH OF THE CAVE for the first time.

It's CARVED to resemble the face of a TENTACLED MONSTER.

The guards watch him intently. Like they're waiting for him to run.

And for the first time, there's a tiny part of Joel that wonders what he's gotten himself into as he nervously heads back inside.

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

As he walks back inside, he passes a door. He backtracks. Stares at it. Huh.

 AIMEE (O.S.)

 Joel!

He looks up to see Aimee walking up to him.

 JOEL

 Hey! What's in there? It's like the only door I've seen here.

 AIMEE

 Oh. Just weapons and shit.

Aimee looks miserable. Furious.

 JOEL

 Are you okay?

 AIMEE

 What? Oh, yeah. Girly drama.

She suddenly hugs him tightly.

 AIMEE (CONT'D)

 I still can't believe you're here.

 JOEL

 Me neither.

He holds her there. Steals a look at the door, and tries to push it out of his mind.

INT. ROOM - DAY

A little girl is doing up Joel's hair, as little girls are prone to do.

Aimee talks with Aspen across the room. Occasionally she steals a glance at Joel and tries not to laugh.

BETTY
You need to look as pretty as possible.

JOEL
Oh yeah?

BETTY
That's what the ocean says. Boys have to be as pretty as possible.

Aimee looks over at Joel again. And he can tell. Something's not quite right.

JOEL
It's a good thing I have you to make me pretty then, Betty.

AIMEE (V.O.)
You need to put this on.

INT. TUNNEL - NIGHT

Aimee is holding A BLINDFOLD out for Joel.

JOEL
On my face?

AIMEE
(laughs)
That's typically where they go.

JOEL
Can't I just close my eyes.

Aimee rolls her eyes. Joel reluctantly gives in and puts it on and

EVERYTHING GOES BLACK. For at least a minute. As Aimee leads Joel somewhere.

AIMEE
Your hands are sweaty.

JOEL
Yeah? I'm sorry-

AIMEE
It's okay-

BANG! A noise to Joel's left! What the fuck was that!

AIMEE (CONT'D)
Sorry! I knocked a cabinet-

JOEL
Are you blindfolded too?

AIMEE
No, silly! Anyway, here's a step.

He goes down the step. To his doom?

AIMEE (CONT'D)
Okay, we're here...

Rustling as Aimee takes off the blindfold, revealing:

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

A candlelit table with food. A couple old cots. Alone.

AIMEE
Surprise. I thought it would be
nice if we had an actual... date.

And all of Joel's fears fade away like a parting fog.

They laugh awkwardly, sweetly. Christian wedding night
awkward.

They sit at the table together.

JOEL
An actual date.

AIMEE
I know it's corny-

JOEL
No, I mean, this is... great. I
would have brought you flowers but
they kill people now I guess.

AIMEE
Oh.

JOEL
But this is really amazing.

She beams.

INTO THE MEAL! HOURS PASS AS THEY DO NOTHING BUT TALK!

JOEL

Do you wanna, try something?

Her eyes flicker expectantly to the beds.

AIMEE

Like...?

JOEL

Oh God no, I mean maybe, I dunno, but, it's this game where I'll say a word. And then you say the very first word back you think of back to me. So, I'll say, sheep, and the first thing you think of is...

AIMEE

Baa.

She giggles. Joel is so smitten it's sick.

AIMEE (CONT'D)

Can I start?

JOEL

Yeah? Okay!

AIMEE

Um. Chicken.

JOEL

Egg.

AIMEE

Bed.

JOEL

Safe.

She sees the scars on his wrists.

AIMEE

Brave.

Joel pauses for a moment as he realizes his answer is:

JOEL

Boy.

AIMEE

Me.

JOEL
Really pretty.

They both blush, laugh.

AIMEE
That was two words.

JOEL
You're making the rules now?

AIMEE
Maybe I am.

JOEL
Fine.

AIMEE
(continues game)
You.

JOEL
Less pretty.

They laugh again.

JOEL (CONT'D)
My turn.

AIMEE
I'm ready.

JOEL
Monsters.

AIMEE
Hate'em. That's one word.

He laughs. Looks at her.

JOEL
Heart.

AIMEE
You.

She reaches her hand across the table and gently touches his.
They both almost sigh.

JOEL
That.

AIMEE
Yeah.

Suddenly the curtains part and ASPEN is there. Seems surprised to see them still at the table.

Joel and Aimee jerk their hands away.

ASPEN

Sorry kids. Brought you desert. For later, maybe.

She sets two plates in front of them. Smiles warmly at Joel. Puts a comforting hand on Aimee's shoulder. Joel notices this, and the strange look it puts on Aimee's face.

Aspen tip-toes away as quick as she came.

Joel sees Aimee staring at his plate. She looks up at him, and very clearly, forces a smile.

Confused he looks at his plate.

Sees a few pieces of fruit. Nothing special-

And berries. *Purple berries.*

Very clearly the same ones Boy stopped him from eating.

He quickly looks at her plate. No berries.

He tries processing this. Smiles at her. Plays along.

AIMEE

We don't have to eat these now-

JOEL

Wanna keep going?

AIMEE

What? Oh. Yeah, okay.

He pokes at his plate.

JOEL

Fruit.

AIMEE

Rare.

JOEL

Berries.

AIMEE

...Good.

JOEL
Poison?

She's surprised. He's right.

She looks away from him. Down at the table. Can't do this.

AIMEE
...Yes.

JOEL
Why?

AIMEE
God.

JOEL
God?

AIMEE
Demands.

JOEL
God or Aspen?

AIMEE
Joel, you don't know what it was
like with the men, the ocean saved
us

JOEL
Is there a way out?

She shakes her head. Pregnant tears in her eyes.

AIMEE
No. I am so sorry-

He holds her hand.

JOEL
Run away with me. We can go back to
my home, you'll love it there, we-

AIMEE
I can't.

Joel stares at her. And he realizes what's going on here.

His first heartbreak.

JOEL
You... can't?

She doesn't look at him. Everything begins making sense.

JOEL (CONT'D)

This whole thing. You lure men
here. You lure stupid, pathetic,
lonely men here to sacrifice.

AIMEE

Joel-

JOEL

Fine.

HE TAKES OFF SPRINTING TOWARDS THE CURTAIN!

He blows past-

INT. CAVE HALL - CONTINUOUS

There are women staring at him. Waiting for him.

IN SLOW MOTION:

Joel runs through them as they let him go.

He turns the corridor towards the cave entrance-

And finds ASPEN with a BLOW DART.

She FIRES.

It hits him in the neck.

And despite his best efforts to keep running, he soon falls
to his knees. Woozy.

He tries to WHISTLE. But barely makes a sound.

Women hold Aimee back from helping him. She's crying.

Aspen kneels in front of him. She strokes his hair.

JOEL

I walked... thirty miles... for
this shit...

Joel sees that door again. But it's OPEN.

Revealing A SHRINE.

A crude statue of A MONSTER with a multi-tentacled head.
Three fingered claws on it's hand. Hideous.

Joel rolls his eyes and passes out.

BLACKNESS.

EXT. THE OCEAN - DAWN

Waves lapping bare feet.

Joel begins waking up. Bleary.

He sees the sun rising peacefully on the horizon.

ASPEN (V.O.)
It's not really your fault.

Joel looks to his side and takes in his situation.

Aimee is cleaning some blistered chaffing around his wrists.
Why is there blistered chaffing on his wrists?

Because Joel is STRUNG UP BY LARGE METAL CHAINS. Each
connected to GIANT STONE PILLARS lodged deep in the beach.

Aspen, her back to him, stares at the ocean.

ASPEN
Man's body wasn't made to be moral.
It was made to survive. And when
there were men here... they broke
us all. Until God saved us.

Aspen turns back to him. Smiles peacefully.

JOEL
I would never hurt any of you.

ASPEN
How can you say that? For certain?
You have no idea who you are.

JOEL
That's not true. I know I'm not
like most guys.

This almost kills Aimee. Aspen has no answer.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Are you going to drown me?

ASPEN
No, of course not.

JOEL

Is something going to come out of
the ocean and eat me?

She doesn't answer this one. Instead, she takes a tiny KNIFE
and PUSHES THE POINT against Joel's finger.

Just a drop of blood.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Ohhh, terrific.

Aspen reverently carries the knife to the ocean and dips the
bloody point in. Kneels there with her knees in the water.

Behind them, the rest of the women are gathered. Watching, as
they do.

Aspen rises and returns to Joel. Kisses the top of his head.

ASPEN

Thank you, Joel.

Joel doesn't answer.

She walks off to join the rest of her group, leaving Aimee
with him. She doesn't say a word. Doesn't even look at him,
despite the fact that he's staring sadly at her.

And then, he laughs to himself.

JOEL

I really thought you would make
everything better.

She looks at him curiously.

JOEL (CONT'D)

I was so depressed back home, and I
thought if I had... someone, like
everyone else did, I wouldn't feel
that way anymore. But I feel the
exact same. Partially because
you're in a crazy girl cult and
you're sacrificing me to a sea
monster, but I think it might be
more than that too.

She doesn't say anything. Keeps at his wrists.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Stop doing that, Aimee.

She looks at him. Clearly heartbroken.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Also, I think we should see other
people.

She looks away again. Nods understandingly.

The waves suddenly, abruptly begin surging back TOWARDS the
ocean. The way they do before a tsunami.

Joel and Aimee watch the waves. The women in the distance are
silent. Waiting.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Is it gonna hurt?

Aimee chooses the worst way to answer that question: crying.

AIMEE
I'm so sorry, I should have warned
you and helped you get away and-

JOEL
Yeah, I wish we were different
people somewhere else too.

They look at each other. Ugh.

Aimee breaks down. Tries undoing the chains, to no avail,
since they're metal. She gets frustrated and looks at him-

AIMEE
I'll stay right here with you~

JOEL
No, Aimee, I don't need you.
(forces a smile)
I can do this by myself. I'm
stronger than you think I am.

She takes his face in her hands.

Stands on the tips of her toes.

AND KISSES HIM.

It is perfectly perfect and achingly romantic and would be
the most lovely first kiss of all time. If she wasn't in a
crazy girl cult about to sacrifice him to a sea monster.

She runs away. Crying.

Joel stands there. Dazed. Shocked.

The corners of his lips can't help but smile just a little.

The waves become more erratic. More freakish, when-
Off in the distance, A DOG BARKS.

Joel snaps out of his romantic drunkenness. Cranes his neck
away from the ocean-

And sees A MANGY GOLDEN RETRIEVER running towards him.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Boy!

Boy jumps up on Joel happily. Trying to lick his face.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Boy! Go away! Go!

Boy chews on the metal chains. But it's no use. Obviously.

And that's when Water starts ASCENDING INTO THE SKY. Defying
gravity.

Boy barks anxiously at the water.

Joel watches in terror.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Well that's new.

Joel tries pulling free of his chains, to no avail-

And then gravity around him starts going haywire-

His feet FLIPPING UP from the sand-

Boy runs back a few feet, barking wildly-

The complete lack of gravity FLIPS JOEL COMPLETELY UPSIDE-
DOWN-

He faces away from the ocean. He sees the cult, upside down,
doing their thing-

He sees Boy, freaking out-

JOEL (CONT'D)

It's gonna be okay Boy! I'm sorry
for everything. Now go! NOW!

Boy does not obey, as per usual.

But you wouldn't hold it against him if he did run away,
because he sees what comes from the water behind Joel.

The size of a skyscraper, it rises from the water almost supernaturally. Water drops the size of beach balls levitate around it. The idol from the shrine. And we'll call it Conthulhu.

WHAT THE FUCK IS CONTHULHU! Imagine if Cthulhu, in all its squid headed ancient evil, was able to rape and impregnate itself, then rape and impregnate the offspring, and repeat that for millennia.

Satan is scared of Conthulhu.

And slowly, the giant stone stakes in the beach begin rising from the ground weightlessly.

Joel sees Aimee, her back towards him, unable to watch.

And as the stakes rise into the sky, Joel is finally flipped the right way over.

He sees the gargantuan beast for the first time. And there's only one thing to say in times like these.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Oh, fuck me.

Joel continues to RISE in the sky until they are (relatively) face to face.

Tentacles slap his face. Just to fuck with him. Draw the anxiety out as much as possible.

Joel does not appreciate this.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Eugh! Stop! Come on!

The monster-god stops. Joel begins spinning in circles. Wind picks up. Becoming louder.

The stone pillars chained to his hands move as effortlessly with every shift of his arms.

And then, as deep as possible, we hear A VOICE. We don't see it come from anywhere, but hear it we do, maybe from deep inside Joel's mind:

CONTHULHU
You are going to die alone.

Joel is taken by surprise. And the words sink in.

JOEL
(quietly)
I know.

CONTHULHU
She hates you. She hates the way
you look. The way you talk. The
things you do. She betrayed you
because you are unlovable. They all
do. And you are going to die alone.

Joel is quiet for a second. And then gives up.

JOEL
You're an asshole.

Joel abruptly stops spinning in the air. Conthulhu listening.

JOEL (CONT'D)
You won. You rule the world and
you're gonna kill me but you know
what? I've never seen two of you
bastards. You're the ones that are
alone.

The water begins spinning around him. Wind becomes deafening.
He begins moving closer to the gaping asshole of a mouth.
Tentacles writing.

Conthulhu does not appreciate Joel.

JOEL (CONT'D)
(shouting now)
I know I'm alone! But I'm good and
I'm kind and I have a dog and you
have no one because you're nothing!
I've been in love and clearly it
sucked but I KNOW WHO I AM NOW! MY
NAME IS JOEL DAWSON, SON OF JACK
DAWSON, AND I'M NOT LIKE OTHER
GUYS! I'M NOT A MONSTER LIKE YOU!

He wraps the iron chains around his wrists. As if he's trying
to find something to hold on to.

The noise is ear-splitting. The end of Joel Dawson is
imminent. But still, he YELLS:

JOEL (CONT'D)
AND I'M SURE AS SHIT NOT GONNA DIE
ALONE!

Joel lets the chains slack just enough and SWINGS BOTH
PILLARS THROUGH THE AIR-

THE SHARP SPIKES OF BOTH PILLARS SINK DEEP INTO CONTHULHU'S HEAD!

But the tentacles keep writing. The wind keeps roaring. Joel keeps floating.

And it seems like nothing has changed.

Joel exhales. Smirks. He tried at least. Accepts his fate-
When-

It starts to rain.

It takes a moment for Joel to realize it's not rain at all, but THE WATER FALLING BACK TO THE SEA.

The God in front of him **IS MOTHERFUCKING DEAD.**

Joel begins to laugh, seventy feet high, killer of a God-

Until gravity returns, and HE JERKS TOWARDS THE GROUND!

Still connected to the chains-

And that action is all it takes for Conthulhu to FALL FORWARD, face first towards the sand.

On top of Joel.

He closes his eyes. Grins.

Not a bad way to go, after all.

EXT. THE BEACH - CONTINUOUS

The women watch their God CRASH INTO THE SAND.

Aspen's faith dies in her eyes.

Conthulhu CRATERS, so powerful that it knocks everyone off their feet.

And when the surface has calmed enough-

BOY runs to the monster's corpse, barking wildly.

He leaves THE DRESS behind.

Water surges from the ocean to the beach. Past Conthulhu's body. Past Boy, who splashes through, looking for Joel.

As the water retreats back to the ocean, Boy sees that it's
TAKEN THE DRESS OUT WITH IT.

He abandons Conthulhu for a moment to get it-

Then stops. Chooses.

Watches it float away for a second.

And turns back to Conthulhu, barking, searching under
tentacles for Joel.

As the women approach, hesitantly, they see A TENTACLE MOVING-

Fearing the monster is still alive, they step back-

Boy growls threateningly at the tentacle-

Only for JOEL TO APPEAR! Covered in goo and shit, having
found safety in that asshole mouth. His chains snapped.

Boy tackles Joel happily! Joel laughs!

JOEL

Boy! Did you see that!

Boy licks his gross face as they celebrate their victory.

JOEL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I threw rocks at you.

Boy barks his apology. Joel smiles.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Let's say we get out of here, yeah?

Joel and Boy walk through the women, who stare at him like
they just saw him kill their God. Which he did.

ASPEN

Wait-

Joel turns to find Aspen pointing one of their guns at him.
She's trembling.

Joel puts his hands calmly behind his back.

JOEL

I'm sorry men hurt you so much.
We're not all bad though, and I
know you're not either.

Aspen, tears in her eyes, slowly nods and lowers the weapon.

ASPEN
How will we survive now?

Joel has to laugh.

JOEL
Are you kidding? You'll be fine.
You scare the shit out of me and
I'm just a five foot eleven guy.

Aspen appreciates this, and lets him go.

Joel and Boy walk on and at the end of the group is Aimee.
Her red hair flicking in the wind.

He smiles at her softly.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Hey, so I know I never brought you
flowers or anything, but... here's
a monster for you.

AIMEE
It looks dead.

JOEL
Yeah, they don't keep well.

They laugh awkwardly.

AIMEE
Where are you going to go?

Joel shrugs.

JOEL
We've got a door to close, I guess.

She understands.

AIMEE
Will you try to be careful?

JOEL
(laughs)
I doubt it.
(looks at Boy)
But we have each other, right Boy?

Boy rubs against Joel's leg lovingly.

AIMEE
Maybe after you close the door...
you could come back?

Joel smiles sadly.

JOEL

Maybe. Maybe you'll leave here.

Aimee nods. Maybe she will. Just not today.

AIMEE

I'm so scared of everything.

JOEL

I know, but it's alright to be alone. I promise.

She hugs him tightly.

AIMEE

Sorry I tried to feed you to a sea monster.

JOEL

It's okay. It happens.

They part and smile at each other. He winks at her, and runs after his dog on the beach, whooping and hollering.

The group watch him go. He has romantically ruined them all.

Joel and his best friend run free, the waves lapping their feet. They run faster and faster and-

JOEL (V.O.)

To whom it may concern. My name is Joel Dawson. I am twenty years old. I am five foot seven and I am not afraid of the ocean.

INT. THE HATCH - MEANWHILE

The group back home are playing go fish. Joel's chair is empty. Out of RESPECT.

JOEL (V.O.)

I'm from north of here, from under a cornfield.

EXT. WILDERNESS - NIGHT

A desert at the dark of night, Clyde marches on. His spear in one hand, the LIT FLARE in the other. The sparkling eyes of monsters being kept at bay by the fire glisten in the dark.

JOEL (V.O.)
*I like meeting new people. My best
 friend is my dog, Boy.*

Clyde grins. BAMF.

INT. THE CAVES - NIGHT

The Conthulhu statue is taken down by Aspen and the women. It is tossed aside with little care or emotion.

JOEL (V.O.)
*I was once told that I would die
 alone, but I thought that was
 bullshit.*

It is replaced by A PORTRAIT OF JOEL.

JOEL (V.O.)
So I killed that monster.

A WOMAN runs into the room.

WOMAN
 One of the horses is missing!

ASPEN
 I'm gonna guess that a horse isn't
 all that's missing.

EXT. A FOREST - DAY

A HORSE AND RIDER slowly approach A CLOAKED FIGURE.

JOEL (V.O.)
I like books, music...

We reveal that the figure is AIMEE, wearing Joel's jacket and an arm cannon. She politely asks the figure:

AIMEE
 I'm looking for a boy and his dog.
 Have you seen them?

The figure begins clapping her hands giddily as we reveal that it's another MAVIS model.

MAVIS
 Hello! My name is Mavis but with a
 five and not an s!
 (MORE)

MAVIS (CONT'D)

Please tell me that your name is
Aimee and you are in love with the
heroic Joel Dawson who saved one of
my lives and to whom I will always
be grateful!

Aimee, momentarily surprised and confused to meet someone
that also knows Joel, smiles sadly.

AIMEE

It is and I am, but I have a lot to
make up to him.

JOEL (V.O.)

And I love dancing.

EXT. THE WALL - DAY

We scale across A GREAT STONE WALL. Made long ago to keep
something out. Or keep something in.

JOEL (V.O.)

*If you'd like to meet up sometime,
I'll be trying to save the world at
the place where the door was left
open. Hope to see you there!*

Joel finishes writing his letter on the wall with a rock:

JOEL

"Sincerely, Joel Dawson."

Other "letters" were written here, but they mostly consist of
very morbid warnings.

Joel steps back and inspects his letter.

JOEL (CONT'D)

One day, I'd like to write a book.
It could be about how I broke up
with the last single girl in the
world.

Boy huffs and walks off.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Or not.

Joel follows happily, past the wall and up a steep hill.

He's made a new BOW AND ARROW. He plays with it in his hands,
getting used to the feel of it.

JOEL (CONT'D)
I probably should have asked for
one of their guns too, huh. Live
and learn, right?

The mangy golden retriever is too polite to answer.

JOEL (CONT'D)
I'm glad you're with me, Boy.

Boy marches proudly.

And then A SCREAM IN THE DISTANCE.

Boy brings his body low to the ground, ready for anything.

Joel nocks an arrow in his bow and together they stalk up the
rest of the hill. When they reach the top, Joel's jaw drops.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Someone's down there.

Another scream! This time, we know exactly what it belongs to
as Joel bursts into a gigantic smile.

JOEL (CONT'D)
IT'S A GIRL!

He sprints down the hill, Boy close behind, laughing and
barking in excitement as the sight is revealed to be:

A CITY.

Completely over-run with GIGANTIC, VICIOUS, TERRIFYING
MONSTERS, most of which are chasing a tiny dot of a figure,
running for her life.

The boy and his dog run towards the monsters, not afraid in
the slightest.

THE END.